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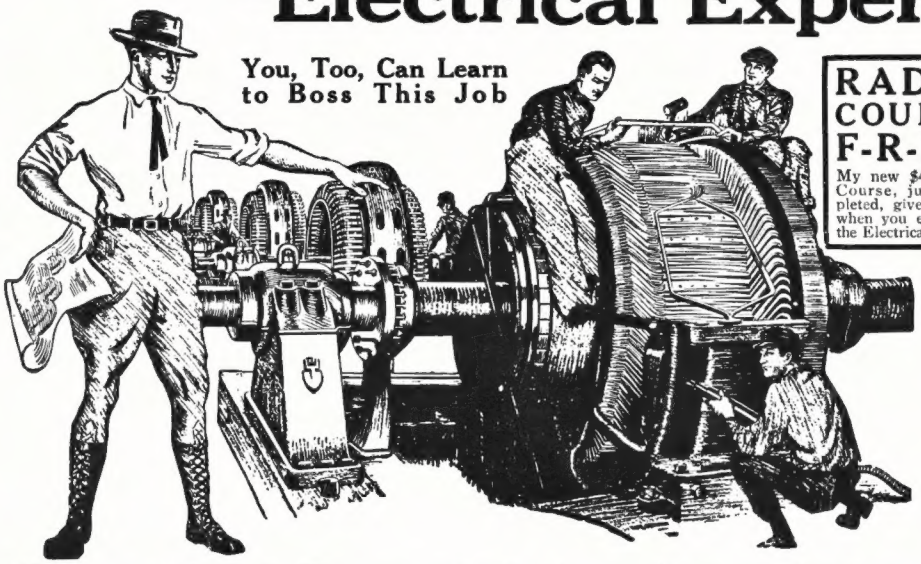
Be a Certificated
"Electrical Expert"



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Today even the ordinary Electrician—the "screw driver" kind—is making money—big money. But it's the trained man—the man who knows the whys and wherefores of Electricity—the "Electrical Expert"—who is picked out to "boss" ordinary Electricians—to boss Big Jobs—the jobs that pay.

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Get in line for one of these "Big Jobs" by enrolling now for my easily learned, quickly grasped, right-up-to-the-minute, Spare-Time Home-Study Course in Practical Electricity.

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Chicago, Ill.

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One year from to-day will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

Don't do it, man—don't do it.

There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life, when with just a little effort he could bring large success within his grasp.

Make up your mind to-day that you're going to train yourself to do some one thing well. Choose the work you like best in the list below, mark an X beside it, mail the coupon to Scranton, and we will send you, without cost or obligation, the full story of what the I. C. S. can do for you.

Right now you can decide where you will be this time next year.

Common sense will tell you that it is far better to send in this Success Coupon to-day than to wait another precious year and then wish you had!

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☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting	☐ Railway Mail Clerk	☐ Railroad Positions	☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Bookkeeping	☐ Common School Subjects	☐ Civil Engineer	☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Private Secretary	☐ High School Subjects	☐ Surveying and Mapping	☐ Plumbing and Heating
☐ Salesmanship	☐ Cartooning	☐ Metallurgy	☐ Chemistry
☐ Advertising	☐ Electrical Engineering	☐ Radio	☐ Pharmacy
☐ Better Letters	☐ Electric Lighting	☐ Airplane Engines	☐ Automobile Work

Name..... Address .....

Occupation .....

ADVENTURE
Jan. 30th, 1923

Published three times a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York U.S.A. Yearly subscription $6.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 38
Number 6

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PISO'S—For Coughs and Colds

An Easy Way to Remove Dandruff

If you want plenty of thick, beautiful, glossy, silky hair, do by all means get rid of dandruff, for it will starve your hair and ruin it if you don't.

The best way to get rid of dandruff is to dissolve it. To do this, just apply a little Liquid Arvon at night before retiring; use enough to moisten the scalp, and rub it in gently with the finger tips.

By morning, most, if not all, of your dandruff will be gone, and three or four more applications should completely remove every sign and trace of it.

You will find, too, that all itching of the scalp will stop, and your hair will look and feel a hundred times better. You can get Liquid Arvon at any drug store. A four-ounce bottle is usually all that is needed.

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IF YOU wish to earn more money, if you are anxious to buy those New Year's gifts you are thinking of, or whatever else you may need—here is your opportunity. Become a special representative in your vicinity for Adventure, and our other three leading magazines. You earn money just as soon as you start working. No experience is necessary. There is no obligation. We furnish all supplies and gladly cooperate with you at all times. Full particulars will be sent you upon receipt of the coupon below. Fill it in and mail today.

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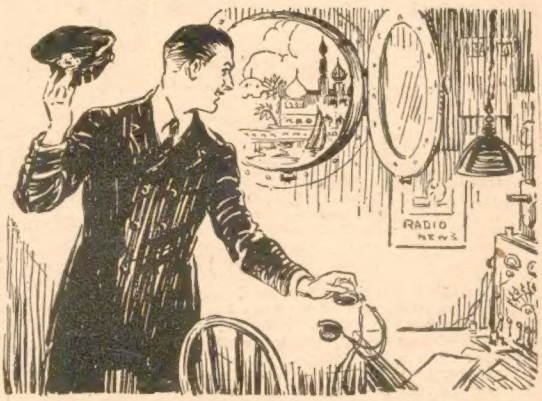
NO MATTER whether you wish to visit every nook and corner of the world or whether you have no desire to travel—here is a fascinating field that offers you big pay in either case. Both on land and on sea splendid opportunities are calling you. And now, through our wonderful Five-Step Method, you can quickly and easily learn wireless at home in your spare time and become a licensed operator. A fascinating big-pay field that you can put your heart into is eagerly awaiting your services. Read how you can step into the wonderful future it holds for you!



Wonderful "Five-Step" Method Makes Wireless Amazingly Easy To Learn

From every branch of wireless comes the call for operators! From the sea comes the call of the United States Merchant Marine, that ply over every ocean. Private steamship lines whose ships reach India, Norway, Africa, and ports in every part of the world also sound the call. Big opportunities are offered with a chance to see the world as an officer with luxurious quarters and good pay. As wireless operator all your expenses are paid right from the start so that you have a most unusual opportunity to save money.

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STEP No. 4—The wonderful NATROMETER—sends 600 different combinations of messages automatically at speeds varying from 5 to 130 words a minute smoothly, noiselessly, and without the slightest bit of "choppiness."

STEP No. 5—National Radio RECEIVING SET—enables you to "listen in" on the world and gives you the practical experience of actually taking messages "out of the air."

These five amazing inventions are furnished to the student with our course. With them learning becomes a fascinating game. And you progress so rapidly that you are a qualified operator almost before you realize it.

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Lawrence Waring, one of our graduates of Norfolk, Va., says: "There is no other profession today offering the opportunity to travel and see the world and at the same time paying a good salary as Radio Telegraphy. My board, of course, costs me nothing. The work is not hard; in fact it is the most interesting work I've ever been in. We are sailing for Verdo, Norway, and will come back by way of England and France. I will get a chance to see the land of the Midnight Sun."

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The urgent need for radio experts and the calls which come to us for our students prompt us to make a special offer open to new students for a limited time. Through this special offer your enrollment will be accepted at a special rate, and you will receive, without extra cost, our new course in Wireless Telephony.

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Mail coupon today for free trial bottle of Mary T. Goldman's Hair Color Restorer. Test as directed on a single lock and watch results. Watch gray streaks disappear and beautiful, even, natural color return. No streaks or discoloration, no "dyed" look.

I perfected my wonderful restorer many years ago to bring back the original color to my own prematurely gray hair, and now millions use it. It is clear and colorless, clean as water, nothing to wash or rub off. Shampoo as usual, restored color is permanent.

Don't let old age be forced upon you by the unattractive shades of gray hair which spread so quickly. Keep your hair youthful-looking.

Mail coupon today for free trial bottle. Full directions and explanations—all absolutely free, postage prepaid; send no money. Fill out coupon carefully, using X to show color of hair. If possible enclose a lock of hair in your letter.

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If You Were Dying To-night

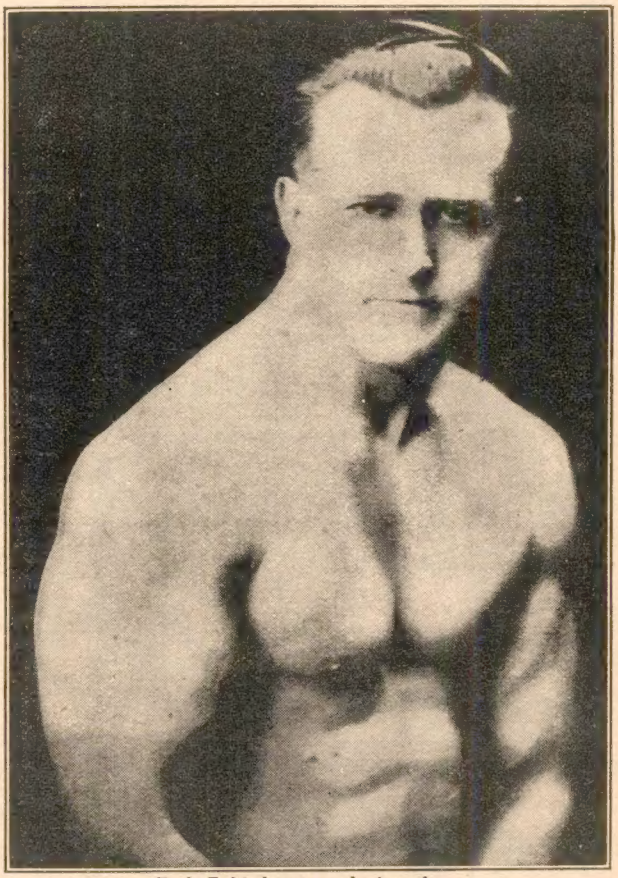
and I offered you something that would give you ten years more to live, would you take it? You'd grab it. Well fellows, I've got it, but don't wait till you're dying or it won't do you a bit of good. It will then be too late. Right now is the time. To-morrow or any day, some disease will get you and if you have not equipped yourself to fight it off, you're gone. I don't claim to cure disease. I am not a medical doctor, but I'll put you in such condition that the doctor will starve to death waiting for you to take sick. Can you imagine a mosquito trying to bite a brick wall? A fine chance.

A Re-built Man

I like to get the weak ones. I delight in getting hold of a man who has been turned down as hopeless by others. It's easy enough to finish a task that's more than half done. But give me the weak, sickly chap and watch him grow stronger. That's what I like. It's fun to me because I know I can do it and I like to give the other fellow the laugh. I don't just give you a veneer of muscle that looks good to others. I work on you both inside and out. I not only put big, massive arms and legs on you, but I build up those inner muscles that surround your vital organs. The kind that give you real pep and energy, the kind that fire you with ambition and the courage to tackle anything set before you.

All I Ask Is Ninety Days

Who says it takes years to get in shape? Show me the man who makes any such claims and I'll make him eat his words. I'll put one full inch on your arm in just 30 days. Yes, and two full inches on your chest in the same length of time. Meanwhile, I'm putting life and pep into your old back-bone. And from then on, just watch 'em grow. At the end of thirty days you won't know yourself. Your whole body will take on an entirely different appearance. But you've only started. Now comes the real works. I've only built my foundation. I want just 60 days more (90 in all) and you'll make those friends of yours who think they're strong look like something the cat dragged in.



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

A Real Man

When I'm through with you, you're a real man. The kind that can prove it. You will be able to do things that you had thought impossible. And the beauty of it is you keep on going. Your deep full chest breathes in rich pure air, stimulating your blood and making you just bubble over with vim and vitality. Your huge, square shoulders and your massive muscular arms have that craving for the exercise of a regular he man. You have the flash to your eye and the pep to your step that will make you admired and sought after in both the business and social world.

This is no idle prattle, fellows. If you doubt me, make me prove it. Go ahead. I like it. I have already done this for thousands of others and my records are unchallenged. What I have done for them, I will do for you. Come then, for time flies and every day counts. Let this very day be the beginning of new life to you.

Send for my new 64-page book

"MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT"

It contains dozens and dozens of full-page photographs of both myself and my numerous pupils. Also full description of my wonderful offer to you. This book is bound to interest you and thrill you. It will be an impetus—an inspiration to every red blooded man. I could easily collect a big price for a book of this kind just as others are now doing, but I want every man and boy who is interested to just send the attached coupon and the book is his **absolutely free.** All I ask you to cover is the price of wrapping and postage—10 cents. Remember this does not obligate you in any way. I want you to have it. So it's yours to keep. Now don't delay one minute—this may be the turning point in your life to-day. So tear off the coupon and mail at once while it is on your mind.

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Achieve Independence!

JOIN the ranks of those who have achieved success and independence! Very often the success of our efforts depends on picking out the right road and sticking to it. Guide your energy properly; center your ambitions on the thing you really want and—"half the battle is won."

NO DOUBT one of your chief aims is to increase your income—to have it large enough to meet all demands placed upon it. Our practical plan will enable you to do this—in whatever time you have to spare. Its success has been proved by the actual experience of thousands of busy men and women all over the United States. They are today special representatives for our four popular magazines, *Adventure, Everybody's, The Delineator,* and *The Designer.*

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The Road of the Loving Heart

ON an Enchanted Island—

of the South Seas where the shining water is ever the sky's blue looking-glass, runs the Ala Loto Alofa, The Road of the Loving Heart—a Road of Gratitude.

The Road was built by the Samoan chiefs for their beloved "Tusitala"—Teller of Tales—as they called Robert Louis Stevenson, the Beloved of every nation.

In thanking the old chiefs who built the road as an expression of gratitude for his never failing kindness, Stevenson said:

"When a road is once built, every year as it goes on, more and more people are found to walk thereon . . . . so perhaps even this road of ours may be useful for hundreds and hundreds of years. And it is my hope that our far away descendants may remember and bless those who labored for them today."

Stevenson's Road—paved with love and gratitude—led to the Island home he built in a world-wide quest for health. The Road still climbs up the mountainside to Vailima, and is trod yearly by hundreds who visit Stevenson's former home because of their Gratitude for the priceless heritage of his life and writings.

But a far greater Road—

is being built today—a road on which year after year more and more grateful people shall walk. A Road which shall not only endure for hundreds of years, but for all time. A Road for which far away descendants will remember and bless those who are laboring for them now.

It is the Road of Health—

Its builders are far-seeing physicians and public and private health agencies. They are working with loving hearts, as the old Samoan chiefs worked, to insure a road that "shall never be muddy"—a Road that is clear of the Pitfalls of Ignorance and that is free from the murderous Highwaymen of Contagious Diseases.

The Road of Health is the only road upon which the sun shines. It is the only Road from which the real beauties of life can be seen. It is the Road sign-posted with Happiness and Success. It is the Road which leads to the Delectable Mountains of fulfilled hopes and ambitions.

Health is not the monopoly of any one group or class. And so the Road of Health is a great Public Highway open to all—to all who keep themselves physically fit to travel it.

For however smooth a Roadbed—

however free from dangers, wrecks cannot be avoided unless the machine that travels the road is in good condition. And just as

no locomotive or motor would be sent out, even on the best of roads, without occasional examination, so the human body—the greatest machine in the world—must be thoroughly examined by your doctor and regularly overhauled, if wrecks along the Road of Life are to be avoided—if the Road is to be the Road of sound bodies, cheerful minds and loving hearts.

Failure to have the complex human machine examined regularly means that you are ever in danger of being side-tracked to—the Road of Sickness—a road over which many thousands needlessly struggle. Upon it are the Hills of Difficulty. It is sign-posted with Heartaches and Failures and leads to Poverty, to Broken Homes and to the Valley of the Shadow long before one's time.

The First Baby Steps—

should be taken on the safe, smooth Road of Health. On it the boy and girl should travel eagerly to school. From it the young business man and woman must not be allowed to stray. Fathers and mothers will find it the one shining road that leads to a Happy Home.

Stretching clean and white before you is the untrodden Road of the New Year.

Therefore Be it Resolved—

to swing wide the Gateway to the Road of Health—the wonderful new Road of Gratitude.

Take the first step today—become a traveler on the sunshiny, joyous thoroughfare—go to your doctor and have a thorough examination made of your body mechanism. The man and woman who find out just how they stand physically can, by proper care and right living, learn to avoid the Road of Sickness—can lengthen life and can get far more out of it.

Have your children examined. The examination of a child oftentimes means the discovery of disease tendencies or of defects which, taken in time, can be cured or corrected. It may save deformities, blindness or suffering that would make death preferable to life.

Get a clean bill of health—your passport for

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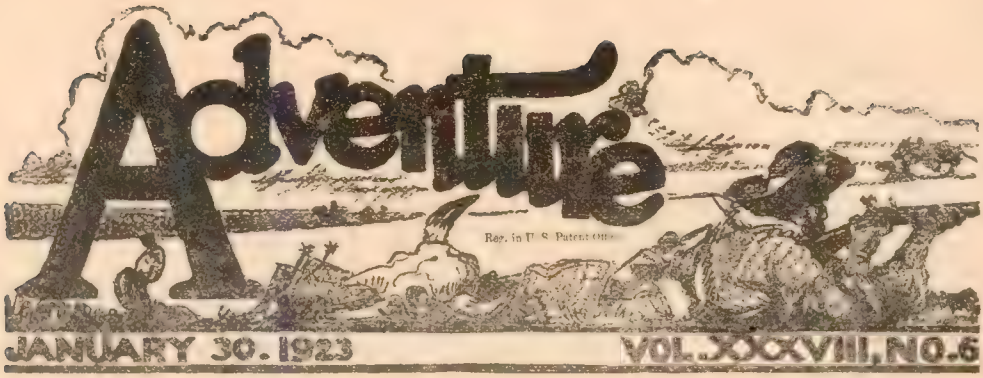
The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company will gladly mail without charge to anyone requesting it, a copy of its helpful booklet entitled *"The Ounce of Prevention"*. It tells the whole story of what is here but briefly outlined.

HALEY FISKE, *President*

Published by

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY—NEW YORK



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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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"THE white man's code is women, and loot, and a lot o' hooch." Saying this, *Big Larkin* deserts the American Army and joins up with a band of Mexican revolutionaries. "*Goggle-Eyes*," *Larkin's* former lieutenant, has other theories on the subject; Fate gives both men a chance to put their ideas into practise. "WHITE-MAN STUFF," a novelette by Barry Scobee, complete in the next issue.

VAST treasure of pearls hidden on a wreck leads to a conflict of rival force and wits with the South Seas as the arena. "THE SALVING OF THE *BERWICK*," by Albert Richard Wetjen, complete in the next issue.

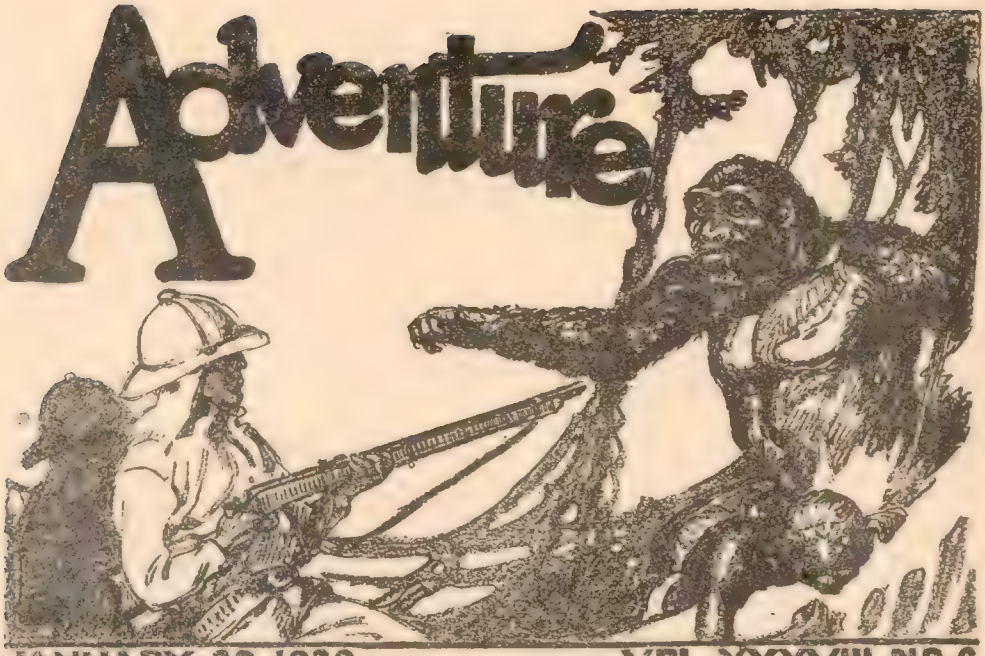
IN THE dead of night *Cercamon* takes the high road to Paris, bearing a message of vast significance for all of France. Hot on his track ride enemies. "THE KING'S CHOICE," by Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, is another complete novelette in the next issue.

"HOW long will the bombardment last?" asked the doughboy. "Until we are all dead!" answered the interpreter solemnly. "Hot dog!" said the doughboy. "Let's go!" One day of the Great War. "A HAPPY BIRTHDAY," by Leonard H. Nason, one of the complete novelettes in the next issue.

"WE CAME first," said the cowboys. "It's free land," said the sheepherders. Cattle and sheep could not live on the same range, and so there was war between the sheep camp of *Bill Matthews* and the J W cow outfit—war and unpitying hatred. "THE MAD COMMANDERS," a novelette by Frank C. Robertson, complete in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure*—the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month



JANUARY 30.1923 VOL. XXXVIII. NO. 6

THE LOST CURE

a complete novel by Charles Beadle

Author of "The Land of Ophir," "Gifts of Diamonds," etc.

PROLOG

CHATTER, laughter, and a subdued tinkle surged rhythmically against the brays and yowls and swoops of sound from the jazz band. Hard light gleamed on the curves of bare shoulders and was flung back in prismatic rays from manicured fingers and powdered bosoms. Waiters scurried like anxious ghosts. Oozy laughs accompanied the tinsel voices of the women.

At a table in an alcove formed by trelliswork screens of painted grapes sat two men smoking cigars. The smaller, who was leaning forward with his elbows on the cloth, was brown of hair, clean-shaven, with chiseled jaw and lips; the nostrils were wide and the eyes had the bird-like brightness of the magpie, a tense probing glance dominated by the prying instinct of insatiable curiosity.

His companion, Birskett, was a much bigger man, blond, broader of shoulder, wider of jaw, and with steady incurious eyes which always seemed loath to leave their objective.

"No," the big man was saying to his companion, Dr. Kirkton; "haven't been back three months from a trip up the Andes. Fizzled out. Went down to see the folks. You know what that is, doc. Then I got a hunch to hunt up something. Went down to see Griffiths, a mining engineer. He usually has something live on the move. But he wasn't in, so I went and sat in the sun on the Battery, wondering where Old Man Fate was going to push me off to next. There was a big bum sitting next to me. Blown in the glass. Noticed he was reading want ads.

" 'Looking for a job?' said I, wanting to talk to some one. 'Me too.' But he gave me a look as if I were a bull. Then he grinned. 'Gosh, mister,' said he, 'I've got a delicate constitution. Ain't strong enough for work, but I likes reading about them

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crazy guys who ask for trouble. Say, what's Looganda?'

"'Loo ganda?' said I. 'What do you mean?'

"Then he shoved your ad under my nose. I left him feeling mighty happy."

"In this old burg," said the doctor, "you can find a man to speak any lingo under the sun. About two dozen showed up who could speak Swahili, but I was dead sure I'd find the Luganda man. Now, Birskett, that's all I'm at liberty to say at the moment. For the rest it's up to you. As far as I'm concerned I'm satisfied that you're the man we're looking for. We'll go along in a minute and see the old man. But one thing: don't get up in the air if he seems—well, kind of eccentric. You'll understand more afterwards."

"Oh, I guess I'm used to eccentric guys," drawled the big man with a slow smile. "I was a warder once in a real bug-house, doc. Had a wonderful time. I was real sorry to quit for I'd never met such a bunch of reasonable folk in all my life."

"Yes," returned the doctor, and his lips thinned to a line. "If all the half-witted idiots were where they ought to be, the rest of us might get on with our work without homicide and arson, theft and perjury, but, man, they'd fill New York, London and Paris and then some. Do you know that patriotism, war, success, are nothing but diseases?"

"Sure," assented Birskett, and his eyes laughed. "But say how about another drink before we quit? Mine's a dry state."

"Another darned disease!" snapped the doctor. "If they'd only prohibit people breathing foul air and fine 'em if they didn't take internal baths they'd do more good than driving 'em into swallowing fusel-oil. Gosh, if some of these wise folk could only look eternity in the face, they'd need a drink to keep the cold of truth out! Say, waiter, two more and double 'em! Get that?"

"Well," continued the doctor, "here's to our better acquaintance, Birskett. Say," he added, "you're American born, aren't you?"

"You bet I am! But you are, doc, huh?"

"I'm a medical man. Science has no country."

For a moment the steady eyelids tightened, then came a slow smile.

"That's right, doc. Here's how!"

"Bug-house all right," muttered Birskett, as the doctor settled the bill. "But I like him."

On the curb waited a smart limousine, which hummed up-town and pulled up before a brownstone house in the eighties.

"This is my private 'yip' house," said the doctor pleasantly, as they descended.

He opened the door with a latch-key, and leaving their coats and hats in the hall, he led Birskett up-stairs to a door on the right. A uniformed nurse was sitting at a table reading.

"Prepare the patient, nurse," he said briskly.

She rose and went into a room leading off and he followed her. Presently he reappeared and beckoned Birskett to enter. The latter saw a plainly furnished bedroom and a figure in the bed.

As he advanced he became aware of small feverish eyes which seemed to peck at him irritably, and as he stood by the bed a slight thrill of horror held him; for the heavy features seemed those of a dead and very old man, so emaciated that the skin, stretched over the cheek and jaw bones and the bridge of the nose, seemed about to split; even wrinkles were annihilated. The complexion looked in the electric light utterly bloodless. The skull was nearly bald; the tufts of sparse hair suggested the mange. A big bony hand resembling a vulture's claw lay outside the coverlet.

"This is the man of whom I've spoken, Lörtzer."

The doctor's voice seemed strangely hard and abrupt to address a patient Birskett thought; even if he were a squarehead he was obviously very sick. The man's eyes glared peevishly for a few moments as if he were struggling to recall something, and then he said irritably in a whisper—

"*Kusema Luganda?*"

"*Manyi katono,*" (I know a little) responded Birskett, a trifle startled at the familiar syllables.

"*Onude wa?*" (Where do you come from?)

"Maine."

"*Omanyi Buganda?*"

"*Nali mukyalo.*" (I have lived in that country.)

Lörtzer continued to cross-examine him at some length in Luganda. As he spoke Birskett's steady gaze noticed that a film seemed to grow over the eyes of the sick man and the eyelids to droop. At length,

wearily and with effort, he looked at the doctor.

"He will do— if you are satisfied," he whispered.

Once more he dragged his eyes, now scarcely showing beneath the lids, towards Birskett.

"If you—accept this job—you must—must swear—swear—sw——"

The eyelids closed, and the lips remained stiff in the shape of a kind of sneer, the shape of the last letter pronounced. As Birskett was staring, thinking that the man must have died, he heard the doctor saying vexedly:

"You didn't make it strong enough, nurse. He——"

"Shall I give him another, doctor?"

"No, no, don't bother him. He's done all that's required by accepting Mr. Birskett. He probably won't last another forty-eight hours. I'll look in tomorrow morning as usual. Good night, nurse."

He led Birskett up-stairs and into what was evidently his private apartment. He indicated a chair and set a tantalus of whisky on the table and thrust forward a box of cigars.

"What's the matter with the old man?" queried Birskett.

"Old? He's not old, man. Thirty-eight."

"Phew! He looks about ninety odd."

"That's what you and I may look like in a few months," said the doctor with a short laugh.

Birskett gazed at the doctor for a moment questioningly; then his eyes opened.

"Sleeping sickness! Is that it?"

"Yep. Last stages. I've kept him going on the needle until this affair was fixed. Now it's no use to keep the dead alive."

"Lordy! It's ten years since I was there and it hadn't started much on the Nile then. Haven't they found a cure for it yet?"

"M'm. That's what we're going to find out." He walked over to his littered desk, drew a folded manuscript from a drawer and threw it on the table before Birskett. "I've got to go and look after some patients. Read that—but recollect, on your oath, you're not to divulge anything if you want to back out of the job?"

"Sure. That's what the old man, I mean that fellow, wanted to say?"

"Yep."

"Dictated by Dr. Adolph K. Lörtzer, in the presence of Dr. Fraser Kirkton and Nurse Patience K. Horniman," was written on the top of the first page.

The script proceeded:

"I, Dr. Adolph Kokstorr Lörtzer, do hereby swear that each and every particular hereinunder related is the truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God!

"In the Spring of the year 19— I left Berlin for Deutsch Ost Africa with a view to gaining the reward of 100,000 marks offered by the Imperial Government's Foreign Office for a cure for trypanosomiasis; also that of the British Government of £20,000; and that of the Belgian Government of 20,000 francs; but more with the object of winning the honor for the glory of the Vaterland, Science and Humanity. This I beg the reader, before he judge me, to bear in mind.

"While engaged at Muanza and district where the disease was rapidly spreading from the British end of the lake, in making most exhaustive studies, I met a fellow-scientist engaged in the same laudable purpose, an American, Herr Professor Dr. Manfred Stoutt. He was on his way to the southwestern end of the Ruwenzori Range with the object, he told me, of studying the disease and the natives at one of the points of origin, namely the Congo, in the neighborhood of the lakes and swamps.

"This perspicacity was admirable, and despite minor theories which were undoubtedly untenable, he appeared unusually free from the stigmata of the western mind. I was so impressed by this that I actually offered to accompany him. Only then did he reveal the narrow-mindedness so conspicuous and regrettable among many alleged men of science. He refused. I saw of course that he wished to gather the honor for his own country and all the cash for himself; he feared that I might wish to rob him.

"Dr. Manfred Stoutt departed, and I continued my investigations. Some six months later he was reported to have written that he had already invented a formula which he hoped would be successful, but that he was not prepared to make any definite statements until he had proved his theory. The man had remarkable luck.

"The more I pondered, the more impressed I became by his theory of seeking at the source, which, as he had said himself, had been suggested to him by a young

British doctor engaged at the clinic at Entebbe. Why then should he profit by what was not his own? If he could use that hint, why should not I? I determined to do so.

"I accordingly set out for the same district. After some considerable difficulties I succeeded in reaching the southwestern spurs of the Ruwenzori and heard that a white man was encamped high up on the mountain-side. Through the fault of my native guides we became lost, and an extremely hostile tribe surrounded us. I understood that they had the impertinence to impede my progress. However, the next day appeared Dr. Stoutt—a most opportune meeting. He seemed on very good terms with the natives; in fact, as I afterwards found out, he had deluded them with an idea that he was of divine origin. He appeared to be in health and very elated.

"Concentration upon a given objective is the royal road to success. But this man seemed unduly gratified with the discovery of many unclassified plants. However, he informed me that some of this tribe who dwelt farther below, around the swamps had nearly been annihilated by the *trypanosomiasis* and that he had treated them with his formula or dope, he termed it. His expression and boyish optimism betrayed his unscientific method of thought.

"That night, while talking by the campfire, he stated quite seriously that so certain was he that he had discovered the remedy that he had deliberately inoculated himself with the trypanosomes, in order to test the action of the drug. I deemed that he was exaggerating, but he showed me the clinical charts upon himself and even the slide of the trypanosomes. I suggested that he should reveal to a brother scientist the formal results, but this he strangely refused to do. In fact he seemed to take my natural interest in extremely bad part.

"The following day he bade me good-by and officiously stated that I would be free to wander where I should wish within the bounds of this tribe without injury. Very justly I was annoyed and reminded him that this was German territory. He exhibited very bad taste.

"I gathered from inquiry that he had a shack or hut of some sort high up in the mountain where the climate was fresh and bracing and where he carried out all his experiments, descending only occasionally to the valley for further investigation. Discourteously, he did not invite me to visit him.

"I ordered the chief to supply me with a hut in order to arrange my laboratory and pitched my tent within the compound. As I considered that nothing was to be gained by frequenting the swamps infested by the *glossina palpalis* I had several subjects sent up to me for investigation.

"At first I was tempted to ascend the mountain and to visit Dr. Stoutt, but considering his discourteous conduct I refused to honour him and his pompous theories. During my investigations here I conclusively proved that the crocodile is not the host of the trypanosomes, and also that the *glossina marsitans*, as well as the *palpalis*, is the host. At this time I was experimenting with a subcutaneous injection of $C_{12}H_{12}O_2N_2AS_2 2HCL$ and $C_{10}H_{13}OHgOH$, which I found very efficacious in arresting the development.

"Some months later, just after the rainy season, I was interrupted by the reappearance of Stoutt. He seemed to have forgotten his ill-bred behavior and was indelicately triumphant in his assurance that he had proved beyond question that he had discovered the remedy, and quite needlessly insulted me by adding that he rejoiced that American science would have yet another feather in the hat.

"I again with much tact implied that he should acquaint a brother scientist. Again he vulgarly refused, refused even to discuss technical matters; caused me to feel that he actually mistrusted me. He was, he said, going down to the swamps to make some last investigations, and after that he would return to the hut in the mountain and pack to return to America.

"In view of the statements to be made I beg the reader to recall this incident to mind, to feel and understand that by his vulgar manner and unnecessary words he had mortally wounded me in my tenderest feelings of patriotism to my country and science.

"Not the sum of the agony of Prometheus was comparable to mine. That this young American of scarcely any degree worth mentioning, should have the luck to stumble upon what his fathers in learning had sought diligently and with great sacrifice for many years, was unbearable. What interest had

these Americans in Africa? None whatsoever! Whereas we Germans have the responsibility of many millions of black souls in our charge.

"That the country of Ehrlich and Wassermann should be compelled to bow the head in deference to an adolescent nation was unthinkable. Luck, that was all! Who was I that I should stand between the Vaterland and such honor? Was I a patriot? I asked myself. And as such I had no choice of action. I trembled with moral rage. I would go to him. I would wrest the secret from him in the name of humanity.

"He had gone to the swamps he had said. But perhaps he had lied to deceive me. I took my most trustworthy man, a *Munyamwezi*, devoted to me, and ascended the mountain. I had some difficulty in locating his camp, for it was high up on the snow line, and the natives below, evidently influenced by that man, lied to me. On the third day I discovered it by means of a track through the bamboo forest. Stoutt was not there, but his records and notes were there. What preposterous luck the fellow had, for he seemed more interested in botany than pathology. Dozens of pressed specimens he had but exceedingly few notes. I began to hunt through them, trembling with emotion.

"Suddenly I looked up, and he stood before me. The rapidity of my intellect showed me that he would be stupidly stubborn. Yet the secret was here beneath my eyes. He was smiling, but he said a word that no man of honour could support. I had no choice. I fired.

"Two men with him as well as my *Munyamwezi*, I was reluctantly compelled to kill also. Then carefully gathering together his note-books I hastened to bury the bodies in a ravine below the glacier. High up on the mountain none of the natives had heard the shots.

"Upon my return I informed them that Stoutt, his men and my own man, had been thrown down a gorge by a mountain demon, knowing that they were convinced of the existence of such chimera. I arrived at my camp without mishap, but deemed it prudent to leave immediately, which I accordingly did, with many expressions of good will between the chief and myself. I took the precaution to send a friendly message to their white god, as they called him.

"In order to follow the shortest route, I ventured across some of the swamps, very carefully protected by veils, infested by the *glossina palpalis*. Not until I reached Muanza did I find it convenient to examine the note-books of the unfortunate Dr. Stoutt. I regret to say that although the notes were copious and detailed, I utterly failed to find any clue to the actual formula; yet from the evidence of clinical charts it appeared almost conclusively that he had really discovered the remedy.

"In despair I returned to Europe, intending to study the records more carefully. On the voyage I suffered from an attack of fever which I took to be a form of malaria, but on arrival in Berlin I was surprized to discover symptoms which caused me some uneasiness. A biologist discovered the indubitable trypanosomes in my blood.

"I had contracted the dread disease and destroyed the cure.

"Hamburg treatment failed and I went to the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. They froze my spine, which arrested the disease but failed to destroy it. In desperation I determined to try America. Perhaps Dr. Stoutt had somehow communicated his secret to his colleagues before his death. On the voyage I experienced a great change of heart. I saw that I had been misled by my devotion to Science; I felt that indeed God had justly punished me. I bow my head to his Divine Justice."

Then followed a wabbly signature, duly witnessed.

When Birskett looked up from reading, the doctor was smoking in his chair.

"Well?"

"Poisonous kind of reptile!" said Birskett, grimacing.

"Yep," assented the doctor uninterestedly. "But are you going to risk the same medicine?"

"Sure. I said so, didn't I?"

"That's all right then."

"But what's the idea?"

"Endeavour to find the body and bring it home for Christian burial. That's his idea of reparation for past sins—murdering Stoutt and leaving his wife and child destitute. Assured me that he had never known that Stoutt was so circumstanced, as he put it. Suppose he meant to imply that had he done so he wouldn't have shot him. But I'm out to find that cure. It's Stoutt's

anyway. And if we can do that, it'll put the wife and kid on their feet, besides saving hundreds of thousands of lives and tacking a bit of tinsel on Old Glory."

I

THE German boat *Marie Augusta*, of the Nord Deutscher Lloyd, which they had caught at Genoa, nosed away from cinder heaps of the Sinai wilderness into the desert of blue and steel of the Red Sea. Every ventilator hopefully turned its blunt ear toward the south. A corn-haired fireman, stripped to the waist, mopping his muscle-creased body with a lump of oily waste, turned blood-shot eyes on the line of passengers sprawling in chairs on the boat deck, in a murderous scowl. Past white shoes, blunt and pointed, scurried white clad stewards bearing trays of iced bouillon.

"Lordy!" commented Birskett, whose long legs nigh blocked the gangway. "These square-heads sure do feed a man. I thought I could eat, heat or no, but seven meals a day gets me beat."

"Nordic races require a greater supply of calories," responded the doctor, "but in this climate it overheats the motor. Dietetics govern the race. Tell me what he eats and I'll tell you the man."

"What about the Chinese and the Arabs? One lives on a handful of rice once a day and t'other on a grab of dates, but if you can find anybody more overheated in the top story than they are, I'd like to have his address!"

"You know 'em?"

"Sure, I know 'em—and more," Birskett drawled lazily. "Say, doc, where d'you get that feed stuff?"

"Now, Birskett, I've given you straight and honorable warning that if you offend——"

"That if I kid any of your tabus you're liable to go after your guns! Doc, you're a funny guy. Why don't you laugh with your mouth like a he-man instead of your eyes? But say, have a look at this fellow," as the doctor continued his diligent study of Luganda.

Two men in whites passed, one a squat man with a notable paunch, a wispy beard and spectacles, who screamed Herr Professor, and the other, tall and slender, sporting a dark mustache, high cheekbones, and a curious eyes with a slight slit at the edges.

"Looks like a half-bred Chinese or Japanese," said the doctor pleasantly, when they had disappeared. "Who is he?"

"Search me! Seems interested in you though. Overheard him asking the purser which was you."

"You speak German?"

"Enough to get a drink with. Say, how about it? Sun's over the yard-arm."

They moved along to the smoking-room as, according to some abstruse astronomical calculations of the Herr Admiral of the fleet, drinks could not be served during certain magical hours upon the boat deck. They fortunately found a convenient seat in a corner near an open port-hole.

"By the way, Birskett," said the doctor after a long pull at cool lager, "I've never thought to ask you, but what are you anyway?"

"I just hate you asking that, doc. I'm more sensitive about that than a woman of her age. If they knew, presidents would deport me, and kings crucify me. Ssh! I'm a professional adventurer! Scientists pass their lives in asking 'how?' Philosophers in demanding 'why?' I, in saying 'where?' " But I say, doc, there's just one thing I'm set on doing before I die."

"Climb Everest or the South Pole?"

"No, sir. I'm going to make you laugh with your mouth."

"There's only one way to do that!" returned Kirkton.

"I know it, boy, and I'm going to do it. Talking about that, did you ever get Stoutt's notes from that pious ghoul?"

"Yep. But he was right as far as any definite formula or even hint of it was concerned. Seemed to me he must have suspected my humanitarian colleague; for he seems to have gone out of his way to omit practical details, and from what I've learned of him since he was a most conscientious worker. And again I think Lörtzer was right that the notes gave internal evidence that Stoutt surely had found the remedy."

Like a Congressman once started on election heroics, Kirkton swept eagerly on.

"A point that occurred to me is this: Apparently this thug murdered Stoutt right up on the snow line and buried him in, on, or beside a glacier, which implies that it's always freezing or near freezing point; and being on the equator the temperature remains the same practically all the year

round. So there's more than a chance that the climate may preserve enough of the body to stand a biological examination.

"He said he had purposely contracted trypanosomiasis, and Stoutt wouldn't lie. If so, I may be able to get a clue. You see, just as any other form of organic structure, a microbe has a body. At the period which Lörtzer claimed he murdered him he had just arrived at the conviction that his remedy was right. If so, there should remain some trace of a dead microbe as well as that of the drug which— What the——"

A violent kick on the shin stopped him.

"Say, guess you've left something behind in the burg, doc."

"What d'you mean?" demanded Kirkton slightly irritated at being interrupted.

"A nurse, boy. See that mirror, opposite. Well, that chink-eyed compatriot of Lörtzer was stretching his ears into a jackal's through that port there."

"But why?"

"Search me! We've got to find out. Now that theory of yours of parthogenesis, doc, 'smost interesting," he continued, and then added in a low voice: "If that son of a celestial don't take that ugly mug out of that port-hole, I'll sure turn his nose into a potato. Go on, man, yap about something."

Yellow heat faded into blue heat, star-scattered. Perim came up like a rain-cloud and dissolved astern. The southwest monsoon struck them, and people sighed and firemen jettisoned homicidal impulses for dreams of bad beer and worse women. Birskett who, as the doctor pointed out, was apt to take instinctive dislikes, tried every device of melodramatic sleuthism to find out whether the mysterious jackal-eared and mongol-eyed German understood English. From the purser he found out that the man's name was Herr Doktor Hermanus Jacobus Friedlander.

"—— help us," he muttered; "another darned doctor! The woods are full of 'em!"

Then, getting mad at the irreproachable attitude of the suspect, he walked straight up and addressed him in English. A blank stare met him. Birskett apologized and retired baffled.

"You're a nice boy," commented Kirkton when he reported, "but you make me sorrowful thinkin' of home. Sure, I recollect you lived in a bug-house."

"Get fresh if you like," reported Birskett with an unusual display of temper. "But he who yips once yips all the time and don't you forget it."

OUT of a curtain of tempered steel rose, like a jewel on a mirror, a vision of white houses and cool palms. Ultramarine water changed to cerulean, splashed with whipped cream. The grumble of the anchor suggested an invitation to a dance. The Tower of Babel was illustrated by the tones of those standing about the green valises and gun-cases which had grown upon the deck as if in imitation of the tropical vegetation ashore, and those others still lounging in chairs or swilling lager in the smoke room.

Harsh Arabic cries rose from the water like sea birds. As steam began dull roaring like an impatient monster, Birskett strode from the companionway toward Kirkton, who was trying to communicate with the port doctor. Birskett grabbed him by the arm and shouted in his ear:

"Where's that chink of yours?"

"I don't know. Why should I?"

"Some one's gone through our kit. Every darned thing."

"Is there anything lost?"

"Not as far as I can see."

"Well, what about it?" screamed Kirkton irritably. "That doesn't prove that he did it. Why on earth should he? There he is, over there in that chair. Go and ask him!"

"All right, your funeral not mine!" growled Birskett, and went off to superintend the unloading of their baggage, particularly the cases containing the field laboratory.

The next morning they embarked for Kisumu on Lake Victoria Nyanza. On the train were some officials returning from furlough to Nairobi and some half-dozen fellows who were taking up land in the vicinity of Lake Naivasha, a movement at that time in its inception.

There was nothing particularly interesting to Birskett, who knew East Africa; but to Kirkton, who had heavily discounted articles he had read, the panorama of the country rising from tropical palms through the scrub hills on to the long plains of the Masai, covered with incredible quantities of game, even glimpses of the timid giraffe, impala, and small buck stimulated a dormant sporting instinct which almost overcame his feverish haste to reach the scene of his scientific labors.

On the train they passed over the summit of Elgon, nigh seven thousand feet high, demanding blankets for the night, and slid gently down to the lake. The next day the *Sybil*, more like a private yacht than a ferry, gently wafted them over Summer seas to Entebbe, a town of small, red bungalows, tin-roofed and garlanded in flowers, squatting on a tiny, wooded peninsula.

On the jetty waited a bunch of 'rikshas with their brown runners, garbed in pants and vests of white-striped red. Near some white men in helmets and ducks and two women in lawn dresses was a black-bearded white priest, an enormous crucifix upon his white *soutane*. Near him stood a rival claimant for the brown souls of the country, a khaki-clad man wearing puttees and a sad blond mustache, talking to an official. Natives of both sexes in white robes tucked under the armpits, and some in the native dress of reddish brown bark-cloth, squatted and chattered over the excitement of the steamer's arrival; others bore on bare chests white metal crucifixes.

HERE serious business began. Birskett sought the collector to arrange for porters, superintended the packing of the numerous packages brought by the doctor—at which he grinned but said no word—into loads and bought trade and other goods necessary for the expedition. Kirkton was furnished with an introduction from his American medical school to Sir William Bull, the head of the British Commission for the Investigation of Sleeping Sickness, who readily placed at his disposal the results of the experiments being undertaken at the local clinic.

"I see," said Sir William, as they walked from his bungalow, "that you propose following in the footsteps of the German Dr. Lörtzer. But why not here? Good Lord, we have enough of the *morsitans* as well as the *palpalis* to share with you Americans!"

"I don't know," said Kirkton diffidently, who had considered it wise not to disclose his true mission. "I met him in New York and there really seemed something in his theory of studying the disease at the source."

"Perhaps. Er—he's dead, isn't he?"

"Yes. Died just before I left."

"Um. Ah. Shouldn't have too much confidence, you know. We rather considered him an awful fraud. He claimed to have proved that the crocodile was not the host. Matter of fact we proved that some six months or more before he left Muanza. Believe the old devil simply heard that from a fellow countryman of yours, Stoutt, who passed through here. Very nice chap. Poor devil either died of fever or got wiped out by pigmies over in the Congo. You must know or have heard of him?"

"Oh yes," returned Kirkton politely. "He was thought much of in the States." Then he added slowly, "We've often wondered whether he might not have discovered something valuable before he died?"

"God knows. He struck me as being an exceptionally capable man. His death either happened in German or Belgian territory, or otherwise we should have made an investigation. Pity. Darned pity. Morning, Blake!"

Sir William nodded to a tall, fair young man, who passed slowly with an obviously depressed air. "That poor chap—another victim! Leaving for Liverpool tomorrow. Careless. Forgot a cut on his finger when he was dissecting a rat. Ah, here we are!"

At the back of a bungalow was arranged a long thatched building containing cages wherein monkeys were confined for observation in all stages of the malady. Some were still bright and perky, eager for nuts as respectable monkeys should be; but some moved restlessly, feverish-eyed and uneasy. One pathetically held his forehead like a caricature of a human on the morning after; others with drawn emaciated faces, squatted in corners, scarcely moving save to scratch lethargically; another fellow, mangy-skinned, lay inert, filmed eyes half-open, yet asleep. A room of the bungalow was fitted up as a biological laboratory, where two young men and a middle-aged one were dissecting infected rats and mice.

Sir William, after pointing out items of technical interest, offered to conduct the visitor to the hospital where were five whites—two missionaries, a Government official, a trader and a sportsman in the early stages of the disease. There were also a few chiefs. They would have required a hospital twice as big as the Woolworth Building and a corresponding staff to deal with all the native victims.

"We've done something," said Sir William, "by cutting down some of the grass in the neighbourhood of the lake and

swamps, the home of the tsetse, but the great difficulty is to segregate the people. As you know, one of the early symptoms is a general restlessness and then they migrate and infect other districts. The mortality is appalling.

"The Sesse Island used to have a population of over a hundred thousand. I doubt if there's three thousand left. And it's spreading fast. The northern shores of the lake are nearly decimated—village after village is a charnel house. It's working up the Nile rapidly and is already down in North Eastern Rhodesia, using the *morsitans* as the host—a discovery, by the way, that your German fellow claimed again!"

He laughed slightly.

"Oh, well, that doesn't matter as long as it was found. The worst of it is that the *morsitans* are even more prevalent over Africa than the *palpalis*. Extend down to the Transvaal. If the disease is allowed to spread right through, the loss to humanity will be incalculable. However, we have hopes."

"If I'm not impertinent, may I know what the latest remedy is you are experimenting with, Sir William?"

"Certainly. Glad to give you all the aid possible. As long as a cure is found, what does it matter who gets the empty honour?"

They went over to the hospital and plunged into technical details. Kirkton lunched with Sir William and returned to the clinic. Towards five they strolled up the street to the club. On the veranda, happily ensconced with a whisky and soda, was Birskett.

"Well, Birskett, how long do you reckon before we can get a move on? I'm just wild to be away since I've seen what I've seen."

"Good for you. Not before four or five days. Collector's darned good sort, but he can't raise men out of the earth. He's sent off right now for porters. They carry as far as Toro on the Congo border. There we fix up for more men as far as the Semliki. But say, doc—" as Sir William was occupied with another man—"get a look at this."

He handed him a copy of the *African World* with his thumb on a paragraph.

> In connection with the award offered by the King of the Belgians for a cure for the dread scourge of Sleeping Sickness, we learn, on the authority of a German scientist now in the United States, that a distinguished American doctor, who is reputed to have discovered the cure, has unfortunately perished at the hands of the pygmies and the secret with him. To deplore such a tragedy——

"Now, they'll be butting in," commented Birskett. "Wonder what that pious reptile has been saying?"

Kirkton glanced at the date.

"H'm. And that's six months old. Darn it, they may be on the spot by now. You're right. What has that sanctimonious faker been yapping about? I'd give more than something to know."

II

DR. FRASER KIRKTON had begun his first experience of the wilds, much to Birskett's amusement. Hitherto he had been of the status of tourist, traveling *de luxe* by boat and train. Now he had to march in humid heat; walk on a Coney Island switchback, as he grumbled good humoredly, for Uganda, or properly speaking, Buganda—as differentiated from Bunyoro, Busoga, and Buhima, each of which has its separate kinglet—is a jumble of small, conical hills, covered with long, rank grass.

The hills are about a mile in diameter and are separated by swamps of papyrus, across which run native corduroy roads of trunks and payayi stems. His town-bred muscles cried out; he didn't know how to sweat in the right places; but he knew how to swear, which apparently comforted his shrieking tendons.

In the interior there were as yet no tsetse-flies, but there was the mbwa-fly which, rising no higher than the waist, feeds for preference upon the wrist, causing large bumps of surprizing irritation and pain; also with the gentle jigger he made acquaintance, which burrows in between the toes and there lays eggs; and yet again with a small tick which, hiding in the grass, bites and produces a fever known as spirulum, for which there is no cure except time and cusses. And as master, yet fearful for his tyranny before the power of sleeping sickness, stalked malaria and his dread executioner, blackwater. Verily, as Birskett put it, a kingdom of bugs.

At last the everlasting hills changed, and they dived across a limb of dense jungle, abode of elephants and game. The next morning, as they sipped their coffee by the

camp-fire, they saw the snow-clad spurs, carmine tinted, of the Ruwenzori peaks.

"Hanno must have heard of those when he talked of the Mountains of the Moon," commented the doctor, scratching diligently at bandaged wrists.

"Maybe he did and maybe he didn't," returned Birskett prosaically. "But I don't know whether you've noticed that all the prophets must surely have missed something when they were looking for plagues of the Lord!"

"But this doesn't go on all the time, does it?"

"No, sir. We change for a new set just beyond!"

"Gosh!" mumbled the doctor. "I'm beginning to have some respect even for that pious thug if he stuck through all you promise, Birskett."

"A hundred thousand dollars and some will do a lot as sticking-plaster, doc. There she goes," he added, as with the rising sun a cloud settled on a mountain peak like a white-haired woman putting on her night-cap before retiring. Guess we won't see her again until we're kind of sitting in her lap. Haya! Haya!" he bawled to the seething mass of porters. "Get a move on, —— you!"

After the brief strip of forest the country broke into volcanic foot-hills set in the midst of which was Toro, a moated and palisaded fort almost under the shadow of the bamboo-clad slopes of the foot-hills of the Gamballagalla, as the natives call the mountains.

In addition to two *Wunyamwezi* they had engaged at Entebbe as personal servants, Birskett managed to secure two Sudanese ex-soldiers as guards and gun-bearers. The Waganda porters had to be paid off and Wanyoro engaged, although they would only be required as far as the Semliki, two days distant, where they proposed to take canoes; nothing, presumably, except the defeat of the British Empire by land and sea, could alter these regulations, and that was all there was to it.

Official red tape and native obstinacy devoured ten days. Each porter had to be registered. But first of all he had to be caught, and as the country beyond a few miles was practically *terra incognita*, besides being reputed Belgian territory, reputed because the border had not then been settled by a boundary commission, he demanded an exorbitant price.

However, Birskett's winning ways and the soothing of the itchy palms of the *katikiro* (prime minister) and the tall ebony man who sported a khaki coat, called Kabaka Kasagama, which being interpreted means King Kasagama, finally secured the necessary number of men. So they started at last, Kirkton's American sense of doing business fluttering round the boiling-point.

"Say, doc," remarked Birskett as they padded past the conical formations of extinct craters an hour after sunrise next day, "you'd best quit that crab walk."

"Crabs!" snorted Kirkton, dragging his head away from the fascinating view of the mountains rising from the foot-hills to the clouds. "I want to get there, man, and not waste time sneaking round the darned universe."

"You'll get there all right!" retorted Birskett with a touch of irritation. "I guarantee that, even if it's your darn corpse. But see here, doc, if you don't smile once in a while I'll sure go bug-house myself. Darn you, a fellow always looks at a man's mouth to register a grin, not at his eyes! Look ahead man, and watch your step!"

The doctor did and stopped in his tracks. Immediately in front of him dropped an escarpment fully two thousand feet deep. Away to the northwest, under a faint haze, was the gleam of silver, Lake Albert; in front loomed vaguely the humps of the Congo hills, cleaved with dark masses; to the southwest meandered a thread of platinum through a field of corn at the bottom of what suggested the rut of a chariot wheel of the gods, tremendously banked on the south by dark masses of bamboo, shooting into crags mist covered. Over the edge dropped the safari like a wet rope into a well.

Kirkton, creasing his brows, sat stiffly but deliberately on a rock and lighted a cigaret. Without a word Birskett did likewise, except in the manner.

"I'd like to build a house here," said the doctor soberly.

"Fine!" agreed Birskett.

Then when they had finished they continued on their way. As they toiled along a path on a plain of grass and scattered euphorbia and palms, the doctor suddenly remarked loudly:

"Ow! What the deuce—" and clapped a hand to his sweat blackened shirt.

"Somebody stuck a needle into you?" inquired Birskett.

"That's what it felt like," Kirkton admitted, rubbing the spot. "What was it?"

"The patient you've come to diagnose," retorted Birskett with an unpleasant suggestion of humor.

"What? Tsetse?"

"Sure! I can't tell you whether he's the *morsitans* family or the *palpalis*. But cheer up, he only gets a bull's-eye once in four shots, according to local calculation."

"But," said Kirkton, with a note of consternation, "they can bite through a thick shirt?"

"You bet they can. I've been bitten right through a canvas hammock and a thick shirt, over there in Busoga. Wasn't sure for years afterwards whether I was due to grab a harp or no. Every darned time I get kind of sleepy I'd think to myself: 'Wow! There she goes!' "

"Then what's the good of veils?"

"Darned little," retorted Birksett, "as far as I know, and as friend Lörtzer must have found out. Except that they make you feel good."

That night they camped by the Semliki River, where it was about sixty yards wide and looking like a gouge mark through a cheese. By the morning the doctor's scientific interest had returned, and he dug out a special kind of bug-hunter's net to start in search of his first specimen. As he was leaving the tent, gloved, and veiled from helmet to chest, he saw Birskett sitting near the small village, superintending the payment of the porters.

"Why aren't you veiled?" demanded the doctor sternly.

"Oh, ——, doc! What did I tell you yesterday?"

"Never mind your layman's theories. Get your veil on!"

"Sure," agreed Birskett soothingly. "I'll get right along; but say, doc, this is where we strike Old Man Trouble," he added cheerfully.

"Why what's wrong now?"

"Go along and peek inside," said Birskett, jerking his thumb at the village.

Wondering, Kirkton entered. At first he saw what seemed merely an ordinary native village of a poor type, a collection of small thatched huts with one bigger than the others. No smoke drifted through the thatched roofs, all of which were ragged and in bad repair. Then his eyes seemed to grow harder and more magpie like.

He had seen a child lying on some matting in the shade of a hut. Instead of the usual pot-belly of a healthy native infant, the stomach nigh touched the back-bone and the ribs could be counted. Limbs were bones clothed in wrinkled skin. The eyes were a mass of flies, yet the boy was slightly alive, for he moved restlessly. But it was nevertheless a "case" to a man of medicine, and Kirkton examined him gently and with interest.

A sound from within drew his attention. A woman, evidently the mother, dragged her weary body through the low hole which served as a door. She was an adult replica of the child.

In another hut he found two men not so far gone. One was squatting and the other lying beside the cold fire-pit. As the white man stood waiting for his eyes to focus to the dark, neither moved, but the sitting one mumbled a salutation. Their bodies were not so much wasted as the woman's. The eyes of the man who had spoken seemed glazed. He immediately seemed to lose interest in knowing that a stranger and a

white was there. As the doctor looked at the prostrate man he noticed that there was some raw banana—and a native always cooks his food—clutched in one hand, and between the lips was the piece he had bitten off; he had gone to sleep in the act of eating.

Unable to speak the language and failing to get any reaction from either of them, the doctor went out. He stopped curiously at another hut and peeped in. A stench of putrefaction stung his nostrils. Birskett came striding towards him.

"Pretty, ain't it?" he asked grimly. "Say, you can see there isn't a man here capable of swinging a paddle. Those that were left fit when they understood what was on, beat it—to infect another district and die just the same. I've a fellow out there. He's not so badly hit yet, but too darned tired to run away. He told me all this. You might give him a shot to wake him up, and maybe we'll get more out of him. I've quit paying these boys, for we may need 'em to take us back. Don't you think that's good medicine?"

"H'm, h'm," mumbled the doctor, absently gazing at the wreck of the woman and child, quite oblivious that his veil was hanging around the back of his neck. "Got to get that cure, by ——! Suppose it's no use wasting time trying to relieve these poor wretches? They're doomed anyway and don't suppose they feel much. That's one consolation to 'em. H'm. What did you say, Birskett?"

Birskett repeated what he had said, adding:

"What put it into your head to get set on coming around this way instead of following up Stoutt's and Lörtzer's trail?"

"Because that's through German territory," returned Kirkton. "Now they know that Stoutt did find a cure they'd block our path at every step, man. Don't you know enough to know that they're not going to let both the honor and the money be grabbed by another nation? The English may be half-paralyzed by red tape, but anyway they play the sporting game."

"Oh, all right, doc, don't get hot in the collar! You're the big chief, and I'll do my side all I know. You amuse yourself with this dime museum, and I'll go make a palaver."

THE doctor, his professional interest now thoroughly aroused, hurried back to the tent for instruments and returned to his cases, who made not the slightest objection whatever he was disposed to do to them.

The midday heat in the Semliki Valley, in reality a vast crack in the earth's crust running from Lake Albert Edward to Albert, with the Ruwenzori Mountains and the Buganda Plateau at four thousand feet on the one side, and the Congo hills on the other, was intense; the nerve-sapping heat where the air is stagnant and denuded of oxygen, seeming to shrivel the lungs and stew the flesh. Before the haze of noon arose, the faint blue streaks of the peninsulas of the Ituri forests, the home of the pigmy, were discernible up the river.

The plain, stretching some seven or eight miles on each side of the river, was as flat as a floor, dotted with phenix palms and euphorbia. To the north, only visible from the top of either escarpment, some twenty miles away the River Semliki petered out into vast swamps as it came to Lake Albert, swamps which afforded a nursery for the tsetse-fly.

Sweating and slightly temper cracked, as he was not yet acclimated, the doctor returned from his labors to the tent to wash his hands in disinfectant and safely put away blood specimens he had drawn from various of the afflicted natives. Birskett, who was still holding an interminable *shauri* with the porters near the village, he did not notice in his absorption of details of his beloved cases. Presently the latter came over and sank, mopping his face, into a camp chair.

"Nothing doing, doc," he reported with his usual irritating cheerfulness—or so Kirkton found it at first.

"What d'you mean, 'nothing doing'?" he snapped.

"The *munyampala* (head man) of the porters can be bribed, but his men won't listen to anything. They say they were forced to come, which is more than probably true, by the *katikiro*, who also probably gets half the dough or more. They swear that wild elephants or a tusk apiece won't keep 'em in this valley overnight, much less make 'em go down the river which, the *Mwami* adds on his own, is certainly haunted by demons as well as flies."

"——!" swore the doctor. "And at the very beginning too! What are we to do?"

"Make a camp here I guess, and leave some of our own men, if the sons of guns will stop alone with the tsetse, and trot over to the Congo side and see if we can scare up some men there. But then probably they won't be paddlers. But we could work down-trail as far as the Congo forest, which they surely won't enter for fear of the pigmies. Maybe we'll strike another river-village before then. That's the best I can think up for the moment."

"Aren't there any canoes here?"

"Saw one or two. But for the gear we want at least two very large ones, and who's going to work 'em?"

"Can't we float down with the stream until we find another village as you suggest?"

"Don't float the right way, doc. She flows into Albert on the way to the Nile." He eyed the sluggish stream. "She don't look very fast, that's true. They're off, darn their moldy souls!"

He pointed to the line of porters stringing out on the back trail. The doctor was moodily chewing a cigar in his vexation.

"D'you think that our men will stick it through?" he demanded. "If they go back on us we'll be up against it."

"Yep. I'm pretty sure of 'em. Our two Sudanese anyway. They've been trained and have transferred some of their superstitions from demons to the whites. Emin Pasha found 'em the most trustworthy of any of 'em. And I think Matana and Kubi are all right. They're *Wanyamwezi*, and I took care that they were not Christians. Hullo, what's hit the porters?"

He referred to the line of departing porters, who had suddenly halted in a bunch. He snatched up a pair of glasses.

"Now what's up?" he added. "There's an askari among 'em, and now they're all coming back."

"Perhaps it's a message from Toro," suggested the doctor. "Mail or something sent on—although the what-d'you-call-him didn't look as if he'd be so obliging as that."

They sat and watched them until a tall Muganda in the Government uniform came up. He saluted smartly and handed them a letter addressed to the doctor.

"Government seal! What's this?" he muttered as he tore open the envelope. A swift reading creased his brows and was followed by a sharp oath.

"Of all the nerve! Read that!" he snapped angrily.

THE letter was official and addressed from the chief magistrate's office at Entebbe.

Sir:

On the representation of the German vice-consul, who is instructed to prefer a serious charge against you, I am compelled to request your immediate return to Entebbe.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
JAMES FIRTH.

"Now do you appreciate why I didn't try the German route?"

"But this is bosh!" scornfully ejaculated Birskett. "What charge, for Heaven's sake? Tell 'em to go to ——!"

"Sure," assented Kirkton more quietly. "But don't you see the game? Any excuse to hold us up. I suppose the British can't help themselves in making the request. Anyway, by ——, one soldier can't take us back, and by the time they try any other tricks, we'll be out of their territory. Yes, sir! But what I can't figure out is, where did they get the stuff?"

"That jackal-eared chink on board," said Birskett, and for once the doctor made no objection. "He must have got enough—merely caught the name of Stoutt—and guessed the rest."

"But what's set them after it?"

"Perhaps that pious thug talked more'n you thought he did. God knows, and we're not likely to hear."

III

KIRKTON was for writing a formal refusal and despatching the messenger forwith. But Birskett strenuously opposed the suggestion.

"Don't reply at all, doc, and keep the fellow as long as possible. That will give us longer to get out of this hole. No; send a letter and address it to this guy in Entebbe and merely enclose your card, with your compliments. For one thing that'll get him puzzled, and secondly it will take this askari straight through to Entebbe; but if you send nothing at all, that solemn guy at Toro may have a brain-storm and act by sending a bunch of the K. A. R.* to persuade us to go back."

The Government messenger they ordered to wait and began to discuss the situation. Suddenly Birskett laughed.

*King's African Rifles, stationed at every fort.

"What, may I ask, d'you find so humorous about this?" snapped the doctor. "You don't seem to realize what is at stake."

"Sure I do, doc," returned Birskett, controlling his inopportune mirth. "To tell the truth, I was thinking of a story I read—yep, right in Uganda in the *East African Standard*. The editor put a proposition to those writing guys: Suppose a fellow had his gun broken and was chased by a lion up a tree, and while the darned lion waited for him at the bottom he discovered a boa constrictor coming down the trunk from the upper branches! Then, what in —— would he do next?"

"I suppose," said the doctor, with graven lips, "that he married the lady and lived happily ever afterwards."

Birskett stared at him for a second and then laughed again.

"Darn you, doc, I never can remember to look at your eyes! But talking allegory, I'm going to hypnotize the boa constrictor or do a Daniel stunt with the lion, but I'm —— if I'm going to Hades as you suggest! See here, doc, if we stop mussing about, scaring up porters up there on the Congo hills, the British lion's liable to grab us, and if we go back the German constrictor'll sure constrict all he knows. We'll shove a river into that tableau and make the hero jump in and swim on a crocodile's back—meaning canoes. Get me?"

"But you said that we couldn't without paddlers?"

"Sure, but since then I've got all het up, as they say. We'll just have to abandon everything not absolutely necessary—and there's lots of your stuff ain't—and teach these men of ours to paddle against time. When in doubt, take a chance. We may strike a village within a few miles."

"But what if it's wiped out as is this one?"

"Never can tell. But mor'n likely it won't be. That Mister *Morsitans* or *Palpalis* who bit you yesterday comes up from the Albert Swamps, so there ain't many of 'em around here. Now let's push this fellow off with the envelop and the card right now so's they can get to the escarpment by night. That'll give us a good few days anyway to lose our trail. Then after *chakula* I'll go and hunt up what canoes there are. As soon as they've gone with the porters—I'll not forget that—we'll break the sad news to Matana and the others."

The askari made no demur, having doubtless never received other instructions than to deliver the *barua* (letter), the magistrate probably reckoning that they would receive it at Toro; and anyhow that they would not dare do otherwise than obey the summons.

AFTER *chakula* of canned salmon in vinegar, canned *paté de foie gras* and biscuits, which the doctor fondly believed to be the usual fare of the tropical explorer, Birskett went down to investigate. The first thing he paid serious attention to was the river. A slight survey showed him that they had a stroke of luck in their favour in that the river seemed unusually low. At first he was puzzled; but a little reflection showed him that in all probability the wet season on the southern side of these mountains might easily be earlier or later than that on the plateau of Uganda and East Africa. Whatever the cause the fact remained, which meant of course that the current would offer less resistance to inexperienced paddlers.

He found seven dugouts, two of which were split, having been left high on the bank in the sun. None of them was very big. After surveying them he overhauled the contents of the loads. He returned to the tent where the doctor sat smoking, dividing his mind between the silly physical obstructions, as he considered them, and speculation on pathological problems. Birskett ordered coffee and settled down to wait patiently until the porters had gone, which he knew would not be until about two, giving them just enough time to reach the escarpment by nightfall.

"Phe-ew!" groaned the doctor. "New York in July's a piker to this heat. If I had to live here I think I'd prefer trypanosomiasis! Not even a fan!"

"All in the cause of science!" Birskett reminded him solemnly.

"Of course, of course!" assented Kirkton a bit hurriedly. "I'm not grumbling."

"Of course not, of course not!" mocked Birskett. "Not yet!"

"What d'you mean?" queried the doctor, sharply. "It's going to be worse?"

"Some! Forest, doc. Never mind, the pigmies like it."

"Pigmies!" snorted Kirkton. "I'm not a pigmy. What use are they anyway?"

"I dunno." Birskett's incurious eyes

stared speculatively at the Ruwenzori high in the mist. "Guess the Guy Who made all that didn't see much difference between pigmies and other folk."

The doctor's eyes brightened as if a film had been torn from them, and he peered at Birskett.

"Thought you had more of a sense of proportion," he said coldly. "I'm here to find out something for the benefit of humanity."

"That's what the pigmy witch-doctor says when he pokes his nails into your guts!"

Birskett rose, and added:

"Well, now those guys have cleared out I'm going to fix things. Say, doc, I guess we'll be shifting tomorrow morning."

He strode off with a wicked grin on his face.

"Doc's a great man," he mused, "but the Lord sure ran short of springs when he made his face."

He called up Matana and Kubi and the two Sudanese, and made them haul out all the loads. Then, still with his malicious smile, he deliberately began to sort them; various packages containing anti-mosquito soaps and lotions, portable camp lamps and electric torches, together with the heavy refill of batteries, two sporting rifles fixed with telescopic sights and their ammunition, Alpine boots and stocks——

"Lordy," he muttered, "does he think he'll find Mister *Palpalis* tobogganning in the tropical Alps!" Various other articles he callously condemned to be placed in an abandoned hut of the village. His own tent, when struck, he gave secret instructions to be left also.

The only cases he didn't touch were those containing the field laboratory. The others he reduced to very little food, the trade goods and an express rifle apiece. Two of the sound dugouts they had found were ample to contain all the loads left.

When he returned he found the doctor, regardless of *morsitans* or *palpalis*, sitting with his shirt half-off, and, above a dirty scrub of a beard, an eye stuck to a microscope. But Birskett said no word of the massacre to him.

Before dawn Birskett was up and kicking the camp into life. While the whites drank coffee and ate some of the few biscuits the remorseless Birskett had left, the boys struck camp. Afterwards the doctor was shown the two canoes. He had on his veil, but had forgotten his gloves.

"You take that one," instructed Birskett, "with Matana and Zapoko. I'll take the other with Kubi and Abdul."

"Say, Birskett," said the doctor, peering around, "have you got all the baggage in these two canoes?"

"Sure!" lied Birskett. "I'm the seventh wonder of the world in packing! Come along, get aboard, man!"

"Ouch!" murmured Kirkton as he crouched down in the dugout.

"Forget it, doc," said Birskett. "You'll be an athlete when you've finished. Exercise the legs and then the arms! *Mukwate mugolomoli eryato mwena—a*" (All aboard! And shove off, you!) he yelled.

LIKE amateurs rowing a skiff around an artificial lake they began, but they all were game to try. The cranky canoes, as sensitive as an automobile to the wheel at high speed, careered and swerved as if bent on charging the bank. The Sudanese and the Wunyamwezi laughed uproariously at their own mistakes; for the African is fundamentally a happy race. Apt at mimicking they quickly picked up the idea from the taller white man, whom they had named, 'He-who-laughs!'.

Wabbly, but still going, they made their way close into the bank to avoid what current there was, with Birskett's canoe in the lead.

The banks were not high except from the point of view of canoe men—six to ten feet perhaps, enough to give the impression of traveling in a sewer. But they crawled along, diligently following the windings of the eastern side.

Kirkton at first was inclined to set a terrific pace; but a combination of Birskett's advice, the rising sun and his own muscles, cooled his ardor. At noon the river, with the refraction from the water, seemed like the interior of a frying-pan of sizzling fat. They halted awhile on a sandbank, from which three crocodiles obligingly but lazily made room. Both whites' clothes were black with sweat from head to foot. Birskett climbed the bank.

"There's a herd of buffalo about a quarter of a mile away, doc," he reported, "and some *pookoo*. Feel like fresh meat?"

"I don't think I do," said Kirkton, meditatively gazing at the dark of the Ruwenzori.

The afternoon was a continuation of the forenoon. They camped for the night on another sand-bank. When there appeared but one tent, the doctor did not even inquire where Birskett's had disappeared. He was really suffering in the morning, The next day was the worst. But Kirkton, although he had grown unusually quiet, said nothing save for the eloquent expression of his tortured brow, and Birskett, knowing and watching, persuaded him to rest frequently.

Their progress was slow, but they made time against the sluggish current. That day they painfully crept by a washout in the bank which had formed a swamp, the extent of which they could not judge. They did not see or feel any tsetse flies, but beyond they came upon a small village with some abandoned canoes, containing nothing save skeletons long since picked by vultures and jackals.

So for three more days they plugged on with diminishing speed, the blue of the Congo forest growing denser. They had reckoned roughly, according to the map, which was very hazy in details, that the southwestern spur of the mountains, where Stoutt had camped, might be eighty or a hundred miles due south as measured by compasses, but whether that was doubled or even trebled by the windings of the river and the possible detours to be made, they had no means of estimating.

The Semliki at that time had never been mapped or even ascended to its source in Lake Albert Edward. Two explorers had reported that they had been held up by the difficulties of the route and the hostility of the pigmies and the natives generally; and Stoutt was not the first man who had officially been "missing" in that district. Shortly before he had come to the country, the report of which may have decided him to take the German route, a famous English explorer, Stratton, and an American, Varden, had disappeared. Also, by reason of the decimation caused by the sleeping sickness, Birskett and Kirkton had no chance of securing a guide from one of the river people who at least might know the river as far as the land of the pigmies.

Birskett realized all this thoroughly, but he said no word to Kirkton, who seemed sublimely indifferent and appeared to imagine that all one had to do was to paddle on for a space, get out, take the turning on the left and the first on the right and be there!

Birskett noticed as they progressed that the country was changing as well as the formation of the river, the former becoming more humped and with greater belts of vegetation, and the latter narrowing with outcrops of sandstone showing among the silt of the banks.

They had just crossed at a sharp bend from one side to the other to avoid the current and had entered a deeper pool than usual, when Birskett spotted a turmoil of water ahead and shouted to the doctor to hug the bank. Clamorous yells answered him. Even as he watched the bow of the doctor's canoe was thrust up on the snout of a hippopotamus.

Zapoko and Matana immediately flung themselves overboard and swam for the bank, but the doctor, dropping his paddle, seemed helpless in the canoe. The canoe fell back with a splash without overturning.

"*Wunjula eryate! Goba mu mwalo awo!*" (Turn the canoe round and make for the bank) yelled Birskett at his men. "*Leka! Leka!*" (Stop!)

As he scrambled up the bank, rifle in hand, he saw the beast break water again and charge. Then the doctor, half-lying on his back where he had been thrown, fired straight into the cavernous mouth some three yards distant.

"Jump, man, jump!" howled Birskett, expecting the wounded animal to crush the canoe to slivers with his tusks. But as suddenly as a released stone sinks the brute disappeared in a swirl. The doctor, jerking his lever, rammed in another cartridge and waited while the rocking canoe began to drift out into the current.

"Jump, doc, for God's sake!" Birskett bawled again.

A terrific swirl of water, some twenty yards down-stream preceded the huge mouth, followed by half the vast body. Two rifles cracked simultaneously as the bulk crashed back, sending up waves of water.

"Get your paddle then, you darned idiot!" yelled Birskett, now afraid that the canoe would drift on top of the stricken beast.

Then the doctor pulled his jangling nerves together and cautiously paddled into the bank.

"Why the devil didn't you jump?" demanded Birskett. "You can swim and the

bank wasn't three yards away. It would have crushed you to pulp!"

"But," objected the doctor, squatting in the canoe, "there's all my field laboratory in this canoe. Why," he added aggrievedly, "did he attack me?"

Birskett laughed.

"Guess he didn't choose you specially, doc! But as a matter of fact they seldom do charge unless—— Sure, there's the reason!" and he pointed down-stream to where the comparatively small, piggish head of a calf broke water. "Mama was cross, that's all. Come on, all aboard! And don't forget to hug the bank, doc."

They resumed their interrupted labors amid the excited chatter of the Sudanese and Wunyamwezi whose observation of physical peculiarities and admiration of coolness was revealed in the name they bestowed upon the doctor, "One-whose-mouth-is-of-rock."

"Say, doc," yelled back Birskett, "I think I have spotted a village from the bank. If it isn't wiped out like the others we may scare up some men."

Two hours later, seeing no signs, he sent Kubi on to the bank to reconnoiter. Kubi cried back that there was a large village.

"*Wala?*" (Far away?) inquired Birskett, conscious of the sun low over the Congo hills.

"*Neda, mwami, wampi nyo.*" (No, chief, quite near.)

Twenty minutes later they saw the village close into the washout of the bank. The absence of canoes was ominous. No smoke nor signs of life were there. Kubi scrambled up on the bank, but he soon returned at the run, shouting:

"*Afudo bufi! Mongota-ai*" (They're all dead! Sleeping sickness!)

The doctor, who understood the word "*mongota*," wanted to disembark to investigate, but as the sun was so low, Birskett wished to get on to another place to camp to avoid the pestilential stink which hung about all these small towns of the dead.

"The whole country seems to be annihilated," said the doctor as they got under way again.

"The north shore of the Victoria Nyanza in Busoga is just the same, only that for one here there are or were fifty villages there. I guess its creeping up from the swamps of Lake Albert and probably also from the other side from Albert Edward."

"But how is it that we don't see any tsetse flies?"

"Maybe they only come—luckily for us, doc—after the rains when this valley is pretty well flooded."

ABOUT a mile above the village the river began to narrow quickly, naturally making the opposing current stronger and reducing their speed to a mere crawl as they painfully dodged from bank to bank. The trees also were growing more forest-like, many of them overhanging the banks. There were no more sand banks.

"Guess we'd better camp, doc," said Birskett, and chose a spot to land on the Congo side.

Birskett, who was first up the steep bank, suddenly dropped on his knees, yelling:

"Down! Down, doc! *Mukotekotel Ogirete bundukil Mangu! Mangu!*" (Crouch down and get out your rifles! Quick!)

The words were followed by three tiny arrows which flicked into the water, and by the crash of Birskett's express.

The men and the doctor slithered up the bank on all fours.

"Pigmies!" said Birskett in answer to the doctor. "They're in that large tree in the jungle there. Look out!" as another flight of arrows sped just over their heads. "Give 'em a volley!"

In reply to the roar of their guns came a wild, harsh yell and a scuttling in the branches and bushes.

"I guess they've quit," said Birskett, after listening intently, "but we'd best camp on the other side. "No, no! Don't go along peeking now. Maybe they're still hiding in the bush, and those arrows are poisoned, remember!"

IV

"DANDY little outfit, ain't it, doc?" said Birskett, when they had landed, holding up a slip of an arrow about a foot long, having leaves instead of the usual feathers. "Watch out for the tip. Just a scratch and you're finished," he added, as the doctor began to examine the weapon curiously.

"What poison is it?"

"Dunno. Some say they have a knack of emptying the glands of a snake, Indian fashion, by kidding him to sting a piece of

meat; others say it's vegetable. But the effect's darned swift, believe me!"

"Ever seen a death?"

There was that cold prying light in the gray eyes again.

"No. But we're likely to if we're not mighty careful."

"I should like to see one and analyze the blood," responded Kirkton gravely. "Extremely interesting. Many of these Indians —I mean savages of any continent—employ most valuable specifics did we only know them. Quinin for example, which the Jesuits learned of from the Indians. M'm."

The place they had chosen on the Ruwenzori side had the advantage of being open for some sixty yards or more about them, affording no cover for an attack. However, Birskett took the precaution to put the Sudanese into watches, taking one, the last and most dangerous, himself. They had just pitched camp on the edge of the bank as the sun dived like a bloody god head foremost into the ocean of green forest.

By the light of the lantern the doctor was busy packing various instruments and cases in waterproof satchels and in reply to Birskett's flippant question, gravely responded that he wasn't taking any more chances for his invaluable gear from hippos.

Zapoko awoke Birskett. He took up his watch in a chair alongside the tent. The night was sticky. The peaks of the Gamballagalla to the east were vaguely discernible against the stars which, although brilliant, seemed hot. Listening intently, he distinguished beneath the seethe of the forest a continuous plaint like the distant murmur of violins.

"There's a cataract not far off," he said to himself.

Now and again came a harsh squawk telling of a parrot surprized by a snake or other enemy. The shrill, irritable yelp of jackals floated from afar. He noted the direction. "End of the plains, beginning of the forest, and trouble if I'm not mistaken."

Presently started a commotion across the river, although it sounded close by. Shrill squawks, cries like a baby in pain, and angry chattering, a tale of forest victory and defeat. Birskett listened as if inhaling. "Gosh! Can't that guy swear!" he thought admiringly.

One star, looking as if it were falling down the slope of a sepia peak, went out. Followed others, one by one, as if a celestial lamp-lighter were putting out the lamps of a street. A warm glow was hinted and then like a prairie fire the mountain tops were alight. Birskett suddenly jumped and shook the shoulder of the sleeping doctor, who quietly rose up.

"Well?"

"Look at that, man!" exclaimed Birskett, pointing to the East.

Kirkton looked.

"Dawn," he said as a statement. "Are the men up?"

"Oh, Lordy!" exclaimed Birskett and laughed, tugging at his half-grown beard. "Sure," he added and retired to his chair, wondering.

During their breakfast of coffee and the few remaining biscuits the doctor wanted to go across and investigate the pigmies, but Birskett wouldn't consent, guaranteeing all the pigmies the doctor might require before long and then some.

"But what's the hurry?" demanded Kirkton.

"A whole darned heap! These fellows will be bringing up all their brothers and cousins. Take a tip, doc. In this country, if trouble comes along, fine! Go to it! But don't *ask* for it! You'll get a belly full before you're through, believe me!"

Before consenting to leave, the doctor solemnly propped a shaving mirror carried by his boy Matana in a satchel and shaved, using a special cream not requiring water.

By the time they got under way, the Ruwenzori peaks were shrouded in mist. The river continued to grow narrower; the slit of the Semliki Valley gave place to granite and sandstone. The going was hard and slow. The forest crowded upon them on both sides, and suddenly the river left the rocky formation and split into half a dozen channels between islands massed with palms and thick growth.

Birskett in the lead chose a passage at random—one was as likely as another for all any of them knew. The channel grew narrower until the branches of the great trees almost interlaced overhead, shutting out the sun, until they were continuously traveling in shadow. Kubi suddenly began shouting his fears of the pigmies to Matana in the rear canoe.

"*Lekeraol*" (Shut up!) commanded Birskett and threatened to throw him to the crocodiles.

The boy whimpered to the Sudanese,

but Abdul promptly cursed him into silence. The only advantage here was that the current, being diverted into many channels, naturally lost power so that they made better speed. In the boughs about them their passage excited troops of monkeys, funny little fellows with wispy beards, who followed, traveling like trapeze artists from bough to bough and swearing terribly. Birskett joined in the cusses, for he knew that the commotion would give a certain message to any lurking pigmies.

The forest grew denser and the passage narrower, suggesting that it might develop into a swamp. However, Birskett pressed on, hoping for the best. He was still sure he had heard the sound of rapids in the night and was puzzled to account for their absence. The only feasible explanation was that it had resulted from some stream rushing down from the snows.

Roots, stretching like water pythons across the muddy stream, began to worry them, and the stench of rotting vegetation in the intense heat was almost overpowering.

"*Owa! Zawata!*" (Oh, the tsetse fly!) exclaimed Kubi, smashing blindly with his paddle.

A gray fly, about the size of a horse-fly, swirled away from Birskett, who shouted a warning to Kirkton. The next moment, in the excitement caused by the dreaded insect, he ran aground on a snag.

"Is this the Ituri forest?" inquired the doctor as his canoe overtook him, much as if a stranger standing in Broadway were saying brightly, "Is this the Woolworth building?"

"Bet your life it is!" responded Birskett grimly. "And it don't look promising, believe me."

"But where's that tsetse fly you were talking about?"

"In ——, I hope," responded Birskett a bit roughly. "But anyway he probably isn't dangerous, as this district doesn't seem populated and therefore infected. But, see here, bring your canoe alongside and take Kubi and Abdul so's we can shove her off."

He instructed Matana and Zapoko what to do, but no sooner were they afloat and trying to pass, than they jammed again.

"This darned snag runs right across the river, I guess," said Birskett. "Say, we'd better land and have a look ahead. I'm scared of this channel petering out."

They backed off and made for the bank, or rather the octopus-like roots of a great tree. Birskett landed, and the doctor and Kubi scrambled after him. They struggled from root to root for some thirty yards until they struck firmer ground. The undergrowth was so dense that although they could force a passage they could not see farther than a yard or so.

Fighting on, they came suddenly upon a short glade or opening, into which the rays of the midday sun penetrated. As they stood peering they noticed simultaneously a splash of bright color upon the moss covered bough of a great tree a few paces from them.

"Curious kind of fungus," remarked the doctor, picking one which was a deep purple with slight stripes of vermilion. "The shape reminds me of Indians' pipes, except for the color. Don't know much about botany, but I'm sure it's unclassified. I wonder if Stoutt found any. Look, that's curious. Many of the stems have been broken—as if some one had been picking them."

Both were examining the strange growth when Kubi, still within the jungle behind them, gave a low cry of warning and pointed. Following his outstretched finger Birskett saw in the gloom of the opposite side of the tiny glade what at first seemed a gigantic human figure sitting against the bole of a tree. As it stood up, another but smaller rose and fled up into the branches like a shadow. The doctor was bringing his rifle up.

"No! no! For God's sake!" whispered Birskett. "Not until four yards!" and he stepped out in front of him.

The strange beast advanced on it's hind legs with a waddle like a deep-sea sailor. Then stopping, it raised its snout-like head. A sound resembling distant thunder reverberated through the dank forest. Raising its hands it beat upon its breast like a great drum.

"Good God, it's a gorilla!" he heard Kirkton saying.

"Keep quiet and don't make him rush," whispered Birskett.

The brute, with a horrible resemblance to an ugly drunk, lurched on again. Then it stopped and roared its challenge once more.

Through the spattered sun rays flickered several shadows which struck the great hairy chest—pigmy arrows! The small eyes under the craggy brows glittered with

insane rage and the enormous canines gleamed. Deliberately, as if convinced of resistless power, the ape came on slowly but stopped again. Then the white man saw that they were not the gorilla's objective. But as a mighty bellow thundered out Birskett fired.

The sound was choked in its throat; the beast swayed for a moment, and then pitched sideways. As Birskett stood waiting to see whether the gorilla was quite dead there came a subdued chattering and the rustle of branches.

"Pigmies!" whispered Birskett. "Look out!"

But no arrow came. At first he could not detect any sign of pigmies. Then a cry from a great tree not five yards from the dead gorilla attracted them. Birskett advanced cautiously.

From a tangle of roots and vines he made out a small chocolate face with a smudge of gray on the chin. At first he thought it was a monkey, but as the figure rose he saw that it was a pigmy, an old man who was chattering and grinning, evidently making friendly overtures.

Birskett spoke in Luganda and then Kiswahili, but was not understood. As the old fellow stood upright, scarcely to Birskett's chest, he saw that one leg was drawn up, to which the man pointed. That there were other pigmies in the trees he knew, but the gestures were so undoubtedly grateful for having killed the gorilla when the pigmy was helpless to escape, that he called over the doctor.

Very interested, his eyes prying into the strange little man, the doctor examined the foot.

"Ankle dislocated," he pronounced, and forthwith deftly jerked it into place.

The pigmy grunted but seemed to understand that that was what was required. Tearing a strip of cloth from Kubi's shirt—to his indignation—for a bandage the doctor bound up the foot.

When all was done the pigmy jabbered something incomprehensible and pointed to the forest.

"He wants to make a date, doc," said Birskett, "and take you out to lunch."

"Extremely interesting," said the doctor watching the man.

"Sure," assented Birskett hastily, fearing the doctor would want to accept, "but leave it open till we're disengaged."

Replying in Luganda, as it sounded better, he handed him several cigarets. Then the little man hopped on one leg to a tree and hauled himself up.

"Almighty!" gasped the doctor watching him disappear monkey-fashion into the foliage. "But Darwin was a great man!"

"Sure," grinned Birskett, "but let's have a look at our older brother here."

Reminded of the rival interest the doctor walked forward as if to attend to the next patient and bent over the huge form.

"Shot through the heart," he pronounced as Birskett came up.

"I sure meant to, doc," returned Birskett. "I've never even seen one before, but I've heard of his ways and that once he rushes you'll never have time to reload."

"Magnificent beast!" murmured the doctor, and produced an aluminium measure from a pocket. The head, with brows as low as a baboon's and the enormously powerful maxillæ, was set almost into the body without a neck; the black short-haired chest and tremendous arms, long enough to touch the knees, formed a mass of corded muscle: yet he had a belly like an alderman.

"Six foot two!" exclaimed the doctor triumphantly. "I don't suppose we can perserve the skeleton."

"Preserve the skeleton!" ejaculated Birskett. "How in Hades are we to carry that as well as the other stuff?"

V

THE doctor assented reluctantly to the impossibility of carrying the corpse of the gorilla. Fortunately Zapoko, Abdul, and Matana had succeeded in dragging the canoes past the obstructing giant root. After a hurried council they decided to take a chance—to push on rather than go all the way back to the entrance to the channel.

Although they kept rifles ready and a sharp lookout on the left bank, they saw no more pigmies.

As the water became more sluggish they made even better speed than on the open river. In places, the boughs, festooned with mossy ropes of creeper, were interlaced overhead. Farther along another troop of monkeys picked them up and to their annoyance insisted upon following, chattering and screaming at them.

Parrots added to the uproar so that their progress must have been advertised to jungle society for a mile or more around. Other brilliant-hued birds darted about here and there. The doctor, searching for more of the curious fungus, a sample of which he had kept, noticed orchids which seemed to glow in the humid twilight.

Some time in the afternoon they came out suddenly, as if emerging from a green tunnel, into the river again, a real river some forty yards broad, with a fairly appreciable current flowing through high banks in open country, which gave a reassuring view of the Gamballagalla. The western sun tinted the mists as with blood and the slopes and ravines in vivid green and deep purple.

From their camp on the Ruwenzori side they could see a wide extent of undulating grass country with scattered light timber, and beyond in the depressions the dark of the Ituri forest, which seemed to sweep in rollers like the sea breaking among the foot-hills of the mountains and even splashing over and higher up the slopes.

The two whites ascended a hillock several hundred yards inland in order to try to get a clearer view of the range to estimate how far it was to the southwestern spurs. But from what they could see any attempt to form a judgment was but a wild guess. However, close beneath, they spotted a herd of buck of the impala species, and Birskett brought down one for the larder.

Now that the doctor had nearly recovered from the stiffness of his arm muscles, he promptly found another pest in the shape of the *bukukini*, a tiny fly, smaller than the *mbwa* of Uganda, which also attacks the wrists, and causes as painful and irritating bites.

"I told you it's a bug country," laughed Birskett, in the act of swallowing his evening dose of quinin. "But anyway it doesn't look as if there are any tsetse here."

Scarcely had he spoken when Kubi sprang up from the fire-side swearing and making savage hits with a ladle. The doctor leaped as if he had been stung too, and grabbing his bug net, always kept handy, captured his quarry.

"*Morsitans*," said he after a swift examination.

"As there don't seem any villages about," said Birskett "probably he's not infected. But he's the more dangerous brute. He's the fellow who follows and infects cattle. How long can he keep the bug going inside him, doc?"

"Several weeks, but we're not quite sure. It's thirty days from the moment his probosis sucks infected blood until the germ is hatched or sufficiently developed."

"Whew-ew! He can travel some in several weeks! When I was here—I mean Uganda—last, they never reckoned he carried the sleeping sickness bug too, but he does. See what it means, doc, when that fellow's found from pretty nigh Khartoum right down into the Transvaal bush-veld?"

"If we don't find a cure, it practically means the depopulation of three-quarters of Africa," returned Kirkton gravely. "And also, I don't know whether you're aware of the fact, Birskett, that there is no valid reason why a mammal may not act as host to this parasite. Already in India has been discovered a form of the same disease in which rats are the hosts and the bite the means of infection."

"Thank God, rats don't often bite a human-then!"

"Quite so, but a mouse is a rodent. A mouse nibbles cheese and other food of humans. Should the human by any chance have the slightest abrasion of the mucous membrane of the mouth or throat, he would be as surely infected as by the subcutaneous injection of the fly's hypodermic."

"Good God, it might become a world plague!" exclaimed Birskett.

"Quite so," assented the doctor quietly.

"Queer, how none of you scientific guys can hit it," commented Birskett.

"It isn't queer," said the doctor sharply. "You have no comprehension of the difficulties."

"Thanks, doc! I suppose it's as hard as finding a cure for cancer or tuberculosis, and the latter sure grabs a few millions every year."

"Another point," continued the doctor thoughtfully, "I don't see any scientific reason why a mosquito shouldn't carry the trypanosome, at any rate for several hours or even days. It is the host of the *plasmodium* malaria—the malaria parasite—so why not the other? Infected rodents would form the source of supply and then of course humans."

"Oh, my God, doc, that would wipe out the States if ever it got there!"

"Another curious fact is that apparently these pigmies who live among the tsetse

don't seem to suffer from it at all—otherwise they would be exterminated."

"Oh," said Birskett, "maybe they're immune. Like the wild buck and cattle-buffalo which are immune to what is commonly called horse sickness from the bite of the same tsetse fly, the *morsitans*."

"Maybe. H'm. Must make a note of that for investigation."

"How long before we reach the southwestern end—I mean where Stoutt had his camp?" demanded Kirkton, who was writing up his notes.

"Lord knows!"

"Can't you give an estimate? I want to begin serious work. Every day lessens the chance of the preservation of Stoutt's remains."

"I can't," said Birskett. "Recollect, you insisted on coming this road where no white man ever passed before—not lived through it anyway. Ah, doc," as Kirkton, rubbing, like any ordinary, bad patient, his wrists against the table edge, snorted impatiently, "I guess you've no comprehension of the difficulties!"

Next day they plunged again into the recesses of an arm of the forest, but fortunately the river broadened out into a comparatively sluggish stream without the tortuous channels between islands. That night, to the extreme uneasiness of the Wunyamwezi, who insisted upon building enormous fires, they were compelled to camp in the jungle. So for four more days they plugged steadily on, sometimes passing patches of more or less open undulating country, but with no sign of past or present habitation. Birskett supposed that the reason was the native fear of the pigmy, each of the spaces of open country being enclosed by dense forest where lay their lairs.

SINCE the talk of the possibilities of the spread of sleeping sickness, Birskett had developed a slightly subdued air; for no man with imagination could contemplate the scientific facts unmoved. To famine, war and pestilence and their bloody fellows in arms of known plagues, seemingly was to be added another even more terrible.

Sometimes he caught himself regarding the pallid features and curiously frozen lips of the doctor with a kind of awe—a queer feeling that he as a scientist was a superior being, one of those few who held the future of the race in their hands; a little resembling perhaps the attitude of a savage in dread of the magical powers of a witch-doctor.

The following day about noon they came out from a swampy region of forest into grass country where the banks ran up swiftly, rounding what was evidently one of the foothills of the range. Anxious to find out their approximate position they sought the nearest landing-place.

"Listen," exclaimed Birskett, as they scrambled up the cliff of the hill. "Hear that?"

A dull murmur floated on the still hot air.

"That explains the sound of water I heard away back! Mighty queer I've never heard it since. Wind in right direction, I suppose. Anyway, that means Old Man Trouble, doc."

"What, a cataract? Well, we can porter round, can't we?"

"Sure," assented Birskett a bit doubtfully.

From the summit, covered in elephant grass, they found that the spur continued inland towards the main range, like a hog's back, but was not of the true mass of foothills. Southeast was a vast ravine, violet in shadow, which seemed to penetrate deeply into the mountains. To the south, the tops of the Ituri Forest swept majestically in billows from the western horizon of the Congo hills.

But Birskett noticed uneasily that the jungle seemed somehow on a higher plane to the south, almost as if it were a plateau. Still, it was difficult to judge at that elevation. Upon a conical mountain, which seemed the nearest and a little out of the line of the range, they could distinguish the snow-line directly beneath the dense haze.

"Well, there's no sign of man, pigmy or beast here," commented Birskett, "nor does that fellow look like the last of 'em. So I guess we'd better hit the trail again."

As they descended Birskett, who was hunting around for spoor, called to the doctor:

"Look," he said, "that's mighty queer! See that patch there and the peg holes? Some time or other a white man's tent has been pitched here."

"Perhaps Stoutt's?" queried the doctor, peering about.

"Maybe, but I doubt it," demurred the

other. "Your pious thief's confession distinctly suggested the extreme southwestern end of the range. More probably those two fellows who disappeared. Possibly they went prospecting into the mountains here and maybe a glacier or something wiped 'em out. But say, didn't that squarehead guy leave a map as a guide?".

"No. But he insisted, as you suggest, that it was the most southwestern mountain. Seemed from what he could tell me that there were no foot-hills; that the main mountain ran straight down—more or less, I suppose—into swamps where Stoutt used to go to make his investigations and where the villages were already half-depopulated."

"M'm. I should like to know what other things that fellow said before he got a change of heart as he called it—fear of hell, I should call it, the darned cur! Guess it's no use barking up that tree, doc, so let's get a move on."

As the river curved the banks lowered promisingly, then rose again and very swiftly closed in until the current was so strong that they scarcely made any way at all. The sound of gurgling water increased. Twenty minutes later the question of water transport was settled, for after laboring around a bend, they entered a curious wide pool or basin some hundred feet or more in diameter, and saw what looked like a subterranean tunnel, so dark was it, a gorge cut in the rock which seemed to turn the river into a mill-race less than thirty yards broad of seething foam-flecked water.

"Gosh!" muttered Birskett back-watering. "We'll sure never make that. Doc," he bawled over his shoulder, "I guess this is where we get off!"

Kirkton's canoe came alongside. The basin formed almost a perfect circle and they noticed that the high banks caved inwards at the top.

"Must have been water erosion," suggested Birskett, "yet it's darned funny, for that looks like lava basalt to me."

"That's right," assented Kirkton. "Most curious. Seems as if the river had somehow forced a way into an extinct crater. Probably extremely deep. I wonder how we could sound——"

"Lord! Look out!" exclaimed Birskett. "There's the current carrying us off into a whirlpool. Turn and paddle, man!" And to the men:

"*Mukale, munyweze yani! Mangu!* (Now paddle hard! Get a move on!)"

By strenuous exertions they managed to get out of the grip of what seemed a whirlpool revolving around the caldron before finding an outlet into the river proper. Drifting back with the current, they searched for a likely place to land in the high cliffs, but it was more than half a mile before the banks lowered so that they were able to find a scalable spot.

From the summit they saw at a glance that a short distance from the pool the wall of the forest began again. After a brief discussion they decided that they had better take Bapoko and go along on foot to investigate.

The immediate country around was fairly open with scattered clumps of trees, palms and euphorbia. Some small foothills apparently ran close down to the river. Birskett didn't say anything to the doctor, but he saw that unless they struck a village right close by, or friendly natives, they at all events would have to leave all their gear behind. What the doctor would say to parting with his professional battery he didn't like to think!

As they made their way without much difficulty over ground mostly covered with dense grass, they noticed that they seemed to be ascending a hill which corresponded to the rise in the banks they had noted from the river beneath. When they got to the pool they found that undoubtedly it was the crater of an extinct volcano, as the doctor had surmised, for on either side from the edge of the overhanging cliff the ground fell away equably; moreover they were upon an eminence slightly dominating the surrounding country and looking down upon the forest roof a mile or more away.

"Darned queer," commented Birskett. "How could the river force a passage right into the middle of a hill, for Heaven's sake?"

"Maybe," returned Kirkton, gazing at the swirling pool, "a volcanic upheaval split the crater in two and also forced the river out of its original course, and by coincidence—accident, I suppose you would call it—the water followed the way of least resistance through the middle of what had been a hill. Anyway, the formation of the land beyond will tell us more."

The palms and scrub became denser as they tramped along near the edge of the cañon and the music of falling water increased.

"Darn it, doc," said Birskett, eying the trees ahead and listening to the sound, "I can't see how that's going to be a cataract. 'Fraid's it's a fall. Look at the level of the forest beyond."

"That means, I suppose," said Kirkton frowning, "that we can't get any farther?"

"M'm. Not necessarily. We may have a stroke of luck and find a native village somewhere around. Anyway we could cache the stuff, and I've a hunch that sooner or later we're bound to find 'em. That tribe Stoutt mentioned won't be likely to have shifted anyway."

Kirkton walked silently for a few minutes and then said:

"I can't possibly leave my field stuff. What good could we do without it? No, Birskett, we've just got to go on if we spend a month here getting the canoe up and over."

The ground as they approached was pretty level and full of scored lava with queer outcrops of granite poking through. Suddenly they came to the end of the palm scrub and grass; in front of them began the forest. Breaking through the bush they forged ahead towards the sound of the waterfall, which was marked by a faint column of vapor rainbowed in the sun. Birskett, who was breaking the trail, suddenly backed.

Jutting out from the scrub ran a wall of granite and, over this, the water poured into the gorge some sixty feet below. But what startled them was that right across the edge of the fall grew the forest, like the hirsute growth on a man's lip—the river had no passage, but oozed directly out of the jungle!

"Most astonishing thing I've ever heard of!" exclaimed the doctor. "Look, this gigantic rib of granite juts from the mountain and continues on the other side blocking the passage for no one knows how many miles. Good heavens, in a very dry season I should imagine it would hold up what water there is. If so, the whole of the Semliki Valley would go dry—possibly Lake Albert!"

"I should worry!" retorted Birskett, who was dismally surveying the forest. "Listen, doc, I'm going to tell you something. Look at that, man!" and he pointed disgustedly to the forest. "This means that our goose is pretty well cooked."

"But why?"

"Why, man! Where has the river gone to or rather come from?"

The doctor stared and frowned.

"I see. The forest must be a vast swamp."

"You bet, and some home of the tsetse, believe me!"

"——! Birskett, I believe you're right. But, man, that must be the swamp where Stoutt went to conduct his investigations!"

"Maybe, but if so it's terrifically long, for look at the mountains. This isn't the extreme southwestern end yet by a long way. Well, guess we'd better prospect around the higher land there and see what it's like."

They found by following the forest and swamp edge that the granite wall ran almost as straight as if drawn by a ruler and rose slightly all the time. After an hour's walking they halted. The foot-hills which had seemed so promising from their last survey were seen to cease, and the forest swamp to sweep on for miles toward what appeared to be the main slopes of the mountains. Kirkton, standing on the edge of the rocky barrier, put down his rifle, remarking—

"There's some of that curious fungus!"

The next moment Birskett heard a startled exclamation and the doctor disappeared. The former ran forward. Evidently, in attempting to gather some of the fungi Kirkton had slipped. The moss-covered rock descended at an angle of forty five degrees like the sides of a dry dock down some twelve feet into what looked like verdant sward. In this floundered the doctor to his waist, grabbing frantically at the grass and fungi which crumbled in his fingers. The slime was sufficiently heavy to support the precious satchel which floated, together with his binoculars, haversack and fly-net case, like a gigantic lily.

"Keep still, man!" shouted Birskett, seeing that Kirkton's exertions were causing him to sink. He cast about hurriedly for a means to rescue him. His rifle was too short to extend to him from firm ground. He tested a bush but the slender branches broke. Kirkton, who was up to his chest, motionless, said quietly:

"Throw broken bushes to me. Maybe that'll keep me afloat, and send to the camp for a rope. I'll try to loose the satchel. Save that."

But there were no bushes dense and heavy enough, except out of reach in the forest swamp, to help a man to float. Birskett hunted wildly for a solution. Then, tugging at small bushes by the roots, he calculated that they would bear a considerable weight, although the branches wouldn't. But how to reach twelve feet down?

Zapoko was frantically tearing up handfuls of grass with an idea of plaiting a rope, but Birskett saw that there was not enough time.

"Keep still and keep your hands out, doc," he shouted suddenly. "I've got it! *Jangu, mangu, Zapoko! Mangu! Mangu!*"

Wedging the muzzle of the rifle well into the roots and beneath the soil of one bush, he fixed the butt in the same manner into another, and instructed Zapoko to grab the gun in the middle and lower himself down the granite slope. Then, sliding over the body of the Sudanese and hanging on to his feet he could get his own feet within reach of the doctor.

It was touch and go. The doctor was now nearly up to his neck. The suction was so great that he could scarcely drag himself out. By convulsive jerks of his legs Birskett helped him a little. Gradually and painfully he climbed up the human ladder. He had barely gotten on high ground when he collapsed with exhaustion and lay smothered from shoulders to heels in reeking spinach-colored slime. Climbing over Zapoko, Birskett crawled beside him.

"Gosh!" he gasped. "That was a near call, doc! Feel all right?"

"Except for this filthy stench," complained Kirkton. "I— Good God——!"

A native had grown out of the earth twenty yards away. He was fairly tall, bronze of skin and naked save for small skins which fell between the groins. He was armed with a spear, long bladed like the Masai, and arrows. He advanced slowly, stopped uncertainly, and cried out something.

"*Mkulamusiza, Mwami! Otyano munange?*" (Greeting, chief! How are you my friend?) called Birskett and walked forward, grinning largely.

He held out his hand, repeating the greeting. The young savage started to jabber rapidly. Birskett shook his head, still grinning amiably. The man spoke a few broken words in Buganda. For a few minutes the two talked. Then Birskett said to the doctor:

"Seems friendly enough. He says they live not far away and invites us, as far as I get it, to go see their chief."

The doctor rose to his feet, looking like an enormous green frog.

"Great!" cried he, dripping slime. "Now, we'll get really busy!"

VI

THE westering sun over the Congo hills superimposed above the summits of the Ruwenzori another and grander range of mountains, mountains clad with pink glaciers and valleys of pale violet against a sky of pallid green studded by an archipelago of crimson islands. The world beneath was a broken line of shimmering blue; and below was another of ultramarine, the bamboo level.

Against one of the foot-hills, whose tops were haloed in scarlet in contrast to the sepia of the valleys beyond, was a village, the low conical huts like warm topazes, dominating a vast sea of green billows, stretching into the radium glare over which hung a faint iridescent glow.

There were some hundred huts; the ragged eaves touched the dusty garbage-scattered ground where pecked indolently a few tiny fowls. Several mangy goats, whose ribs were countable, dozed in the shade. On the outskirts bordering the tall elephant grass, honey-combed with passages, a woman lay just beyond the shade in the scorching rays. Save for a bunch of old and filthy leaves, worn Eve-like, she was naked, revealing a tautened belly, tiny, shriveled breasts, pipe-stem thighs and features shrunken to bone and skin. Near her, sprawling in the hot dust, was a male infant, pot-bellied, with chubby brown limbs, crowing contentedly.

In the center of the clutter of huts was a roofed-in frame, beneath which lounged a company of men. Upon a woven mat squatted an old man. The face was like a wrinkled mass of leather, water-soaked and prematurely dried in the sun; the forehead was partially bald; the dense wool, slightly grayed, was divided by a shaven path that ran right through the center of the skull; the limbs were those of a mummy, the belly clung to the spine; on the scaly chest hung

a large bleached bone suspended by a plaited fiber; but the eyes, deep set, and almost hidden by folds of skin, were as bright as an angry bird's. Beside him, a little to the right, was another man even more withered and ancient than he. Upon his wrist was a huge bangle of ivory which was kept on only by the clutching of the claw-like fingers.

A young man among the ruck sat with his back against a pole of the club house, gazing with lack-luster eyes at the others. He was not particularly thin for a native, but the glands beneath the jaw were so swollen that his neck appeared to be almost swallowed by his body. Four others among the crowd were like him.

Nobody spoke. The group rested as do cattle on a day of gnats in the shade of an oak tree, as if drunkenly contented with the joy of living. Upon them came Matanzi, seemingly the only being actively alive. On the threshold he squatted and grunted, discarding the air of haste like a cloak for one of bored indifference. Fully three minutes passed, slow minutes, while the sharp eyes of Bafakoki, the ancient wearing the bone, watched him shrewdly.

At length he too grunted. Matanzi murmured and gained another grunt. The other mummy issued a like sound. Whereupon Matanzi said, as if it were of no importance whatever:

"Mine eyes have seen men of white-leaf faces* (white men) coming from the country of the wild men (pigmies)."

Several assorted grunts registered a general interest.

"How many?" inquired the man of the pendant bone.

"As the arms of a man."

"*Aiee!*" exclaimed a young man, wriggling to a squatting posture. "We shall be eaten up!"

"Thy voice is as the bleating of a kid," came the reproof of an older man with gray moss upon his chin, whose opinion was confirmed by a grunt from the two ancients. "Let thy elders speak lest the *Ahuu* seize thee!"

At the threat of such a fate the young man subsided like a frightened cat. The group remained silent, but by the nervous movements of limbs proclaimed that the news had stirred them deeply. All eyes were turned upon the withered man with the bone, Bafakoki.

As if very conscious of his importance he posed motionless with closed eyelids. The shadows grew longer. From the lips of Bafakoki began a moan rising into a prolonged howl like a young hyena. A shiver ran through the company. Slowly he opened his deep set eyes and began to speak in a monotone.

"This is the sun of which I have spoken! This is the sun that I have promised ye! Is it not as many wet moons as a man has fingers that you have been eaten by the sleep of the *Ahuu?* Is it not as many wet moons as the fingers of a man's hand that the first white leaf face dwelt among you? Did he not breathe upon you and your children? Did he not depart whence he came, leaving his spittle upon you? Had you ever before the sleep of the *Ahuu?* Did your young men and maidens wither like leaves in the sun before the time of the white-leaf faces? Where now are your elders? Thou, Zofulo, sleepeth not thy son who was our chief? Where now are the young women that were your wives and your daughters? Where the young men that were begotten of you? Who sleepeth in your huts? Who is stricken by the *Ahuu* when eating or talking? Thou Bufolo, is not the youngest of thy wives a sleeper? Thou, Tanaka, what doth the eldest of thy loins? Thou, Torko, is thy male child fat like unto the buffalo? Were these things before the coming of the white-leaf faces? Answer me, my children?"

Came a deep grunt of assent.

"Ehh! Remember you the coming of the last white-leaf face? What were the words that I said unto you? What were the words of the son of Zofulo? Where is now the son of Zofulo? The *Ahuu* may tell thee! Ehh! And after him? For many moons were not the hands of the *Ahuu* light in their touch? Answer me?"

"*Aghummm!*"

THE last ray of the sun was shot like a search-light from the tops of the foot-hills on to the clouds, turning them to crimson peaks.

"If the white-leaf faces are not brothers of the *Ahuu*, wherefore are they not eaten by the wild men? Answer me?"

"*Aghuummm!*"

"If the wild men are not the sons of the

*Simile taken from a common kind of white African convolvulus, primitives seeing a flower merely as a colored leaf.

Ahuu, wherefore are they not devoured by the white-leaf faces?"

"*Aghuummm!*"

"Where dwell the wild men if not in the forest? From whence cometh the white-leaf faces if not through the forest? Are they not brothers and sons of the *Ahuu?*"

"*Aghuummm!*"

"Yet am I wise! Yet have I many wet moons more than you! Yet will I talk with the bones that have healed you! Leave me to speak with the bones!"

As one man they rose. The younger fled with the terror of the unknown upon them; the elders, still conscious of keeping up appearances, strode with hurried dignity to their huts. The scarlet glow upon the peaks of the clouds was turned off as by a hand and out of the East the sepia shadows rushed hungrily from the mountains and swallowed the village.

But Bafakoki did not budge. In the warm darkness, under the stars peeping out through a velvet pall and the hum of grass insects, he squatted quietly until, reckoning that all the others were safely within their huts, he rose and gravely made his way to his own, which was close to the club house.

On one side within squatted his five wives. Four were mothers, but their eyes were bright, and the breasts of the latest shone like inverted saucers of dull bronze in the dim light of the smoky air percolating from dim fire through the roof.

Bafakoki was a serious man and a patriot. His wives were healthy because he was intelligently observant. He had—scarcely consciously—remarked years ago that those who went down into the swamps beneath were touched by the dread hands of the *Ahuu;* therefore had he commanded that those that were his property should not go there.

Had he been more civilised he would probably have told himself that as he had no scientific nor moral justification for this fancy, he had no right whatsoever to persuade his fellows from the benefits of the chase and from the roots and valuable leaves which their women brought them; as a physician of renown he could not afford to risk his reputation. Moreover, had he not discovered a cure which had undoubtedly been of inestimable benefit to them in the matter of the treatment of the last white-leaf? Who could dispute that afterwards the dread disease had nearly ceased for many moons? How could Bafakoki be supposed to know that this was due to an unprecedented drought? Everybody could bear witness that his theory was true.

Bafakoki dined in solitary state, attended by his silent, adoring wives in the smoke behind him, upon boiled wild bananas and a portion of venison gathered and trapped from the swamps, worth several prescriptions in the form of amulets against the evil eye, the breath of *Ahuu* and other tribal complaints. Then Bafakoki, being a prohibitionist and knowing no better, retired to sleep in great satisfaction of mind and heart.

But next morning, when from the forest swamp below came faintly the squawk of the parrot and the hubbub of monkey life, Bafakoki, attentive to his duty to the community, arose, gathered his doctor's bag from a dark corner hidden by a reed mat on the men's side of the hut and departed for the club house.

When the outline of the bare peaks of the Ruwenzori was sketched in crimson and the barubaru bird squealed harshly, Bafakoki was discovered by Zofulo, he of the gray-mossed tuft of beard, squatting in the same position as he had been left on the previous evening. Before him were the contents of his professional bag.

Zofulo, without words, squatted silently in his appointed place as the father of a late chief, for the chiefs of this tribe were as many others of many colors, elected according to their prowess in slaying. Silently regarding the symbols before him, Zofulo grunted solemnly.

Before the crossed shins of the witch-doctor were crossed two other shins but bare of meat; in front was a skull.

Those to follow were Bafolo, Tanaka, Bakata, and thirteen others, who read the message there portrayed and grunted sonorously. Then came two more and lastly Matanzi, who was clothed like a prophet in a mantle of golden bronze as the sun shot above the bare peaks. Then each and every one glanced upon Matanzi as a man chosen by divine Providence.

For not once in many moons, when the sun had risen, did the snow clad peaks lack their bridal veil.

Although the carved gargoyle face of Bafakoki showed no tremor of emotion, satisfaction welled within his heart. The choosing of a messenger to the strangers of

the white-leaf faces was a delicate matter for the mission was dangerous should anything go wrong. Fortunately Matanzi, whose family had suffered from the dread hands of the *Ahuu,* was a man of little influence.

Yet of the significance nothing was said. Gravely they sat until all the men of the village, some four hundred healthy and those who could walk, were assembled. Then Bafakoki spoke, well aware that none would contradict him.

"O Zofulo, son of him—" for they might not mention the names of the dead—, "is it agreed that Matanzi shall go forth to greet the men of the white leaf, brothers of the wild men, sons of the *Ahuu?*"

"It is agreed!" assented Zofulo, doubting as many a chief before him, yet not daring to differ.

"It is agreed!" echoed the mob.

"O Zofulo, son of him," continued Bafakoki, "is it agreed that the medicine of Bafakoki is all-powerful?"

"It is agreed!" assented Zofulo, knowing that to dissent was a declaration of war.

"O Zofulo, is it agreed that Matanzi shall be thy messenger to the people of the white leaf?"

"It is agreed," responded Zofulo despondently.

And so it was.

VII

THE encounter and friendly invitation more than compensated in Kirkton's opinion for his ducking in the slimy swamp, although for days he could not get rid of the stench like sulphuretted hydrogen or rotten eggs splashed into his hair.

Matanzi, eying the four fire sticks, of which he had dread but knew little, the last pale-leaf face having been a missionary, proposed that the white men should go straight with him to the chief. To Birskett's question he implied that the distance was but one sun, but Birskett, knowing the native and seeing the anxiety beneath the wooden exterior, doubled the time.

The doctor at the very suggestion resolutely refused to budge without his beloved instruments; so, conforming to the usual etiquette, they gave him a present of *bafta** for the chief and tried, by piling all the loads in a row, to din into his head the number of porters required to carry them.

"I won't leave the gear and that's all there is to it," stated the doctor firmly. "But don't you think these are the people Stoutt was so friendly with?"

"Maybe, but I've a hunch they ain't. They'd surely send a man speaking better Luganda—or Kiswahili perhaps, whichever Stoutt talked—because they reckon whatever lingo Stoutt used to 'em was every white man's lingo. Besides I reckon Stoutt's mountain is quite a way down the trail yet. Anyway the luck seems setting our way."

However, to Birskett's surprize and their mutual relief some twenty odd men turned up in the afternoon of the following day, over which went professionally the probing eyes of the doctor. But the primary symptoms are difficult to detect, particularly on the heavily pigmented body of a negro, and the doctor was disappointed.

They were all fully armed with long-bladed spears and bows and arrows, and stood in a circle rather like a bunch of shy schoolgirls, staring at the two whites sitting in state at the table before the tent. When greetings had been exchanged they squatted down.

"*Munyampala aluwa?*" (Which is the headman?) began Birskett.

But they could not understand until he had repeated the words several times. Then Bafolo replied. The *shauri* proceeded, but with long exasperating halts when neither side could understand the other. Even when they had finished Birskett wasn't sure whether they really had grasped that they had to carry the loads. They exhibited a certain uneasiness as Matanzi had done and wanted to start immediately; but as the shadows of the foot-hills were already touching the slopes of the mountains, the whites refused.

Then came a most considerable and unintelligible discussion among them which ended in a demand for more presents for each one, and the information that they would go away and return on the morrow.

Birskett assented to the latter proposition but not to the first, fearing that they might get some idea into their heads to make off with what they had already got. They seemed inclined to dispute and become ugly, but a harangue from Bafolo, into which the names of Bafakoki, Zofulo, and *Ahuu* were frequently employed, quieted them. As they trooped off, the doctor began to protest.

*Trade cloth.

"That's all right, doc, they'll come back, I guess. But what I can't make out is what the scare of stopping here is. Possibly fear of our magic or something like that. Then it's no use trying to force 'em. Kubi!" he called to the boy who was preparing the table. *"Omanyi kino Ahuu?"* (Do you know what *Ahuu* is?)

"E-el Manyi ko, Sebo. Omubi Omutukuvu." (Yes, sir. I know a little. It's a sacred evil person).

"Basetani?" (Evil spirits?)

"Eyeh! Nedal Mwami!" (Yes, no, chief!)

"M'm. Bwonokiriza nga?" (D'you believe in it?)

"Simanyi." (I don't know) returned Kubi shyly, and showed his teeth in response to Birskett's smile.

"Guess he's like a lot of folks at home," said Birskett to Kirkton. "Wants to back coming and going."

"I suppose it's the idea of evil in contradistinction to good. God and the devil."

"They have no conception of a good power. If it's good, they say, that's fine; if it's bad, slip him something to keep him quiet. That's the idea. But I was asking because these fellows were jabbering about that *Ahuu* guy. I think that's the reason they won't stop here. I had thought that maybe *Ahuu* was the pigmies. It's useful to know when dealing with these people what particular kind of bug they fancy."

HOWEVER they made preparation. Birskett, on the principle that they couldn't tell when or how soon they might need the canoes; had them paddled down the stream a bit, dragged up the banks and cached in the elephant grass.

Before the sun had surmounted the mountain cloud the men were filing down into the camp. The tent was struck and they were presented to the loads. As Birskett had foreseen there was some confusion. But the first man, Matanzi, jabbered at them until some light seemed to dawn; they consented and began feeling the weights.

Finally, after much more discussion a black raised a load on to his head; then the others followed. After that there was no hitch.

The village was, they estimated, about fifteen miles away, set at the base of the lesser foot-hills. About three miles farther began the barrier of the swamp which, they saw through the glasses, ran straight for quite another day's march towards the lower slope of the true mountain, where they could make out the smoke of other habitations. Optimistically as usual, because he wished it so keenly, the doctor would insist that they must be the people referred to by Stoutt, but Birskett was as equally certain that they could not be.

They arrived scarcely half an hour before sunset. Women, children, and men (far more than the village could house, Birskett noted) waited silently to stare upon the whites. They had not passed the first group before the doctor's keen eyes had spotted three indisputable cases.

"You see," he said joyfully, "the sickness is here! And yet I haven't seen a single sign of a fly."

"Maybe they hang around the swamps down below where these fellows go hunting or something; again, you may only have them here when the wind or season is favorable. But for Heaven's sake, doc, go slow and don't rush 'em or we'll be having some darned tabu wished on us."

They, with the two Sudanese escorting, were led at the head of the caravan straight to the men's club where sat solemnly Bafakoki, and Zofulo who, until another was chosen, acted as chief. The strangers were bidden to sit before them. Warriors swarmed around, and without were men, women and children. The doctor was more interested in the crowd than in the chiefs.

As befitted the chief physician, Bafakoki could speak no other language than his own; so Bafolo and Matanzi were summoned as interpreters. After the formal greetings Birskett gathered with difficulty that the ancient with the bone pendant was politely thanking them for the lavish gifts.

He translated to the doctor, who replied—

"Good, but work that up for all it's worth and promise him more if he gives us porters to take us on to the next tribe," adding, with his eyes on the man with the gorilla-like neck, "after I've investigated these fellows."

"In a day or two, doc. You can't rush 'em, I tell you."

He went on to try to give the usual blarney about how glad the whites were to see so great a chief, taking Bafakoki for that exalted personage; but evidently neither of the two interpreters could get his meaning. Then again came a repetition of the appreciation of his gifts.

"Funny," thought Birskett, "they usually play the other game. However, if the old bird feels like that about it, so much the better."

The rays of the sun shot beneath the awning right on the breast of Bafakoki, attracting the doctor's roving eyes.

"Note that bone on the chest?" he whispered to Birskett.

"Sure."

"Know what it is?"

"Monkey, isn't it?"

"No. Human shin. Cannibals?"

"Perhaps. Now what's old father Noah saying? Right, I get you, son. He means the show's over and we're to be shown up in the elevator to our rooms. Come on."

The whites rose, followed by the two Sudanese, and went with Bafolo, escorted by the entire village except those whose dignity or sickness forbade, to a hut on the outskirts in a more ruinous condition than the others.

"Bright-looking guest-house!" commented Birskett. "But why haven't those darn fool boys pitched the tent?"

"And where are the goods?" inquired the doctor techily.

"Inside, I suppose," he returned as he doubled up to look through the door. "Darn it, I can't see a thing, and it stinks like Hades. Kubi! Matana!" he called. "*Kubi aluwa?*" (Where is he?) he demanded of the Sudanese.

"*Simanyi, Mwami.*" (I don't know, chief.) responded Zapoko.

"Darned funny!"

Birskett straightened up and gazed around at the mass of the crowd whose spear blades glittered in the dying rays of the sun. "*Ku-ubi! Heh, Matana-a!*"

"*Mwami-i!*" came a voice from the far side of the village.

"*Okola ki! Janguwako! Mukali mwetiki?*" (What the —— are you doing there? Come here quickly and bring the loads.)

The reply came soaring in the native tenor used to carry over distance. Birskett swore.

"They've taken the things to the chief's house. I was scared the darn fools hadn't got what we said. I don't believe they've ever seen a white before and they think we've given 'em all the loads as a present! Come on, we'll go across and fix things."

Followed by the doctor and the Sudanese, he turned to walk through the village, but the pressed ranks of the men about him did not open.

"*Muvao!*" (Get out!) he commanded sharply. "*Mangu!*" (Get a move on!)

But not a man budged. Thinking that they did not comprehend he gestured to make room to pass, tapping one man smartly on the chest. The fellow scowled and grasped his spear. Birskett's instinct was to hit, but looking down on the faces about him, he saw a ferocity that made him realize that something serious was afoot.

"Get your gun, doc," he said sharply, and drawing his revolver, jabbed the muzzle into a stomach. The man did not advance, but neither did he retire; nor did the expression of his face alter. For a moment they stood like that, the white glaring down into the savage's face.

"Don't fire, doc," Birskett said very quietly. "It's very serious. They don't know what a gun is. We could get one or two, but they're too close. They'd finish us in as many minutes. Put your gun up and smile—darn it, you can't, but put it up!"

Deliberately he grinned into the black man's face, lowering the revolver at the same time. For several moments he continued the grin, then slowly the man smiled slightly. The tension relaxed. He looked to see whether Matanzi or Bafolo was there. He could not see either.

"*Mwami aluwa?*" (Where is the chief?) he demanded, but the fellow stared blankly.

"He can't or won't understand. Don't get up in the air, doc. There's something gone wrong, but I don't know what the game is yet. Let's see whether they'll let the boys come to us. Five guns are better argument than three."

He called to Kubi and Matana to come to them and waited. Presently they arrived.

"You see, doc, they haven't any idea of a gun. Don't look so darn mad, man," he added and laughed for his own benefit as well as the savages'.

At that moment the last sun ray glowed on the mountain cloud, and night came like the drawing of a curtain. There was the sound of movement of many apparently going away, but between the pinnacles of the surrounding huts and against the stars snapping out were the gleams of bayonet-like blades.

Birskett rapidly cross examined the two

Wunyamwezi. They had followed with the loads into a compound which they had imagined to be the one allotted to the white men's use by the chief; hence they had not, lacking instructions, pitched the tent; also it was usual for the chief to supply food for his guests. But when they had attempted to set out their camp beds and what not, the natives had interfered and had tried to hustle them off. They had refused to leave the loads.

Birskett asked them their own opinion. Of the local dialect they scarcely understood two words, but they were convinced that the people were "bad."

"And I guess they are right," assented Birskett, turning to the doctor. "This seems a pretty mess, doc. Apparently we've walked right into a trap, but what the game is I can't guess yet. Never in all my experience have I known natives to play a dirty trick like this. But there's something unusual behind it."

"But the loads, man, my instruments—" began the doctor angrily.

"Now listen right here, doc," said Birskett, laying a hand on his shoulder. "These devils are more than usually dangerous, for they haven't yet had the fear of God put into 'em by guns, and right in the middle of the night is no time to start in teaching 'em. They'd rush, and wipe us out before they'd time to know where they'd been hurt or where it had come from. Get that, don't you, old man?"

"Sure," assented Kirkton, still with impatience in his voice, "but the loads——"

"That's all right. We'll argue about that tomorrow. If ever you want to see the loads again, sit right down and look as if you were darned tickled to death with yourself, and we'll have an illumination, just to show 'em. That'll give us some time to think up stunts."

WHEN Birskett told the boys to make a fire and they began to hunt for fire-wood, the savages got the idea, and two of them brought faggots and glowing embers.

"Now what d'you know about that, brother?" said Birskett as they sat down with their backs against the hut. "Ain't they the friendly guys? Say, doc, it's an awful shame you can't operate on that mouth of yours and carve a grin on it!"

But Kirkton was vexedly regarding the fire lighting operations, oblivious even of the skirling mosquitoes, and clutching his precious satchel as if he feared he'd lose that as well. As the fire flared up the light caught on the sheen of blades. But presently came some women bearing gourds of stewed goat and boiled wild bananas.

Birskett and their four men tucked in as if it were a bridal feast, but Kirkton, who managed a little of the stewed goat, couldn't stomach the banana, which resembles tasteless potato. Afterwards, the doctor took out his waterproof cigar case, but as he extracted one, Birskett ejaculated—

"No, no, for Heaven's sake not that, doc!"

"Good ——, why not?" expostulated Kirkton a bit querulously.

"Might scare 'em too much," said Birskett. "How many have you?"

"Six. Why?"

"Nothing. Keep 'em for later."

The doctor obeyed, but he didn't seem to like it.

"He's a great man, the doc," mused Birskett to himself, "but oh, Lordy, I wonder what would have to happen to him to make him smile!"

They passed the night there, half-lying against the hut in preference to the heat and stench within. The savages seemed to have disappeared later, but muttering voices now and again showed that they were somewhere around, and when a half-moon arose above the cold bare peaks in the east she cast dull star-echoes on spear points.

Dawn came at last. During the queer twilight, while the sun climbed the mountains and spread her daily veil of clouds, there was a stir in the village, but none approached them save the scattered guards.

Birskett rose, and after stretching himself, crawled into the hut saying—

"I've a fancy to see what they've got here."

Kirkton heard him striking matches and muttering. Then came a sharp summons—

"Doc, come here!"

Kirkton crawled within, "phewin'" at the stench.

"Lucky I came in," said Birskett. "Now we know what we're up against. Look at that quickly."

He held up a newly lighted match. The doctor saw a broken side of a packing-case stuck between the grass of the thatched wall like a picture and what looked like some hieroglyphics upon it. They were

letters crudely and apparently hurriedly carved with a knife and filled with clay, presumedly to block them, and in the light of a second match he spelled out in French.

"Sacrificed to cannibals," followed by an indecipherable name.

The match went out in his fingers as he tried to read the signature.

"*On mange bien ici!*" (Good eats here!) came Birskett's voice in the gloom with a sardonic laugh.

Then flowed in the doctor's accents a torrent of oaths almost with tears of exasperation in them.

"Gosh, that's fine, doc!" gasped Birskett, in admiration as he finished. "I never guessed you knew all those words!"

"—— you, you confounded idiot," snarled the doctor. "Can't you understand? Haven't I done all in my power, spent all I have, suffered all sorts of silly —— things, to try to bring some good to humanity, to carry on the really great work that Stoutt began, to benefit all mankind—these insufferable idiots as well—and then this parcel of benighted, impossible fool heathens want to upset all my plans just when I'm almost in sight of my goal—and, my God, then they want to *eat* me!"

"Gosh, doc, that sounds awful human!" There was a peculiar noise in the dark and Birskett added—

"Come outside, doc, and then you'll feel better."

VIII

SOME ONE has remarked that there's only a breadth of a spider web between comedy and tragedy. Birskett saw the humor in the doctor's attitude. The doctor certainly didn't. Yet they both had the object of the expedition just as much at heart; merely the difference in the point of view. True, the doctor lacked what is called a sense of humor, but he lacked another thing—which was fear. It simply never occurred to him to be scared by the idea of being slaughtered and eaten; he could only see that his precious plans were upset. He would have sworn just as deeply and sincerely had an eagle flown away with his satchel.

Yet Birskett perceived in reality more than the scientist; he realized the extreme danger. As far as things looked they probably would be eaten; but if so, well, perhaps it wouldn't matter very much after all; maybe somebody else would find the cure for the relief of humanity, and if so, what did it matter as long as the patient got his medicine? Give in? No, sir. That never occurred to him any more than the funny side of it to the doctor. But sometimes in this world you've got to abandon temporarily looking at the star to avoid the sewer.

When the boys came up he proceeded to investigate the contents of their haversacks; mostly chocolate, tobacco, matches, cartridges and odds and ends for the road. He found a pocket torch and paused, holding it in his hand.

"Pity we didn't start magic with that last night," he commented. "Might have done for the eyes of a devil. H'm. May be useful yet."

He continued to overhaul Matana's bag. At the bottom, among some loose cartridges, his hand closed upon a long cylindrical object. He took it out and regarded a rocket, one of a dozen such as are usually carried on exploring expeditions mainly used for signaling in case anybody gets bushed, which, falling out of a case, the boy had shoved in his haversack.

"H'm. That's useful. Guess it'll have to be a night getaway. Yep. They won't likely start anything today. Now I've got to keep doc quiet. Some job!"

He sat still thinking out things.

"Say, doc," said he at length. "I've scared up a chance to get out of the pot with a bit of luck, but I can't for the life of me figure out how we're going to get the loads away without porters, and I reckon Mister Mesmer couldn't hypnotize these guys into doing that. We'll have to call back for 'em. That's all there is to it."

"We made a mistake," said the doctor sententiously, "in bringing the loads here."

BIRSKETT gave a yowl and literally rocked against the hut thatch with laughter, startling even a savage into backing away several feet, which was more than a revolver in his stomach had done.

"Lord! Lord!" moaned Birskett. "You'll be the death of me, doc, before they get me into the pot!"

"Hysterical!" muttered the doctor, which fortunately was not heard by his companion, and relapsed into a broody contemplation, feeling an unwonted sensation of

being lost in his search for a plan to preserve his precious loads.

He had, as he phrased it, no data to work upon. Birskett also was occupied upon the same subject, but in spite of his data, no feasible possibility could he find of getting the loads away unless some one would be good enough to send along an automobile truck. They would be doing quite well, he thought, if his schemes already hatched succeeded, to get away with their hides and what was upon them.

After the sun had resumed his daily broil, a woman came along and placed a gourd of tepid and smelly water at their feet. Armed savages still squatted unostentatiously among the huts. Birskett weighed the chances of each picking a man and making a bolt for it. But they would have to run the gantlet of the village.

"Fire it?" thought he. "No. They would be accustomed to fire. But they were not used to guns and queerly enough that fact was the chief difficulty. No, they must adopt some strategy to get at a distance; then they would have time to drive into the savage minds, which as many others are fairly obtuse, that their weapons were lethal, dealing instant death; thus putting fear into them before they were overwhelmed by numbers."

If only he could get at those loads! In them were more cartridges, rockets, and some dynamite. A deal might be done with that combination. Yet he was acquainted with quite a lot of the workings of the savage mind. That there had been no innocent misunderstanding about the presents, he now realized; but he knew, too, that those loads would now be looked upon as having priceless magical powers merely because they had belonged to a white man, on the principle that what is of a god or devil, a being of supernatural power, partakes of that power. Any attempt to recover or approach these now holy articles would be most fiercely resisted, perhaps more even than their own escape.

Yet never had he known in twenty years' wandering, a purely savage tribe act as they had done. What was the bug in their head? Did they take the white man for a god or a devil? Usually the former—hence their delight to honor and flatter him. Yet if the latter, they usually feared and therefore tried to appease him. Something was wrong with their cosmogony. But what?

Squatting there in the hot shade with wary eyes and his rifle across his knees, Birskett tried hard to solve the problem. He started systematically to recall all the systems of superstition that he had encountered or read of.

The nearest he got was to wonder whether, as was quite possible, they attributed the sleeping sickness to the white man? Yes, but, if that were the case, they should therefore endeavor to appease these givers of death. Maybe the secret, he mused, lay with the other white, the man who had written the message in the guest hut. At that moment the doctor, browsing in the next field, butted in.

"Birskett, who d'you suppose this man may have been?"

"The man who went to the pot? God knows. As they obviously don't know anything about a gun he must have been a missionary."

"French?"

"Dunno. If he was a Continental he'd surely write such a message in French. Only an Anglo-Saxon would in English. He must have drifted up here through the Belgian Congo. Yet he might have been a trader, explorer, anything, for they may have caught him without a gun. A dozen possibilities. We'll never know, I guess. Evidently he knew where he was going, so probably he understood something of their lingo. Anyway he did his best, poor ——."

"I wonder," said the doctor, "whether he had trypanosomiasis?"

"Hope he did!" ejaculated Birskett. "So maybe he gave them a dose. Say, doc; could that happen?"

The doctor considered.

"M'm, rather difficult to say. Never studied the subject. Yet—one may contract tuberculosis from infected cattle and milk, so I suppose that the same would apply to trypanosomiasis. M'm, extremely interesting. I must experiment. M'm. It's very annoying about those loads," he added, pulling out his note-book.

The shadows dwindled until they were driven to squat within the hut for protection from the heat. Throughout the morning continued a low murmur from the center of the village where evidently a big *shauri* was going on. Flies buzzed irritatingly, but the eyes of the doctor, now almost mechanically on the lookout, failed to detect the cross wings of the tsetse.

The Wunyamwezi and the Sudanese, to whom he had not imparted the news concerning their probable destination, squatted patiently, occasionally discussing the situation in low tones, Zapoko improving the time by cleaning his rifle.

Both whites, unaccustomed to the native manner of feeding once a day, began to feel hungry. Several times racial disinclination to brook a black man's whims nearly brought Birskett to his feet; but long experience and anxiety, not for himself, but for the object of their expedition, restrained him.

The doctor indeed showed fewer symptoms of impatience than did Birskett. But sitting there quietly, captives, and conscious of eyes watching all the time to see how they were taking it, made hard going.

The shadows began to crawl again, but still the hum of the *shauri* continued. Birskett amused himself by speculating what the subject could be, trying to see whether he could gather any idea that might suggest the advisability of instant action. Once he said casually to the doctor—

"I guess we'd better beat it before supper."

The doctor gazed at him inquiringly and said:

"How about a cigar now? Those creatures can't matter."

"No. But to-night you can smoke your head off."

The doctor made a slight noise of irritable disgust, but deferred to Birskett as the boss of the outfit as he always did. Later Birskett set Kubi to plaiting grass torn from the roof into a cord. Within the hut, out of sight of the curious eyes of men or women, Birskett began binding the rocket on to a bamboo. Kirkton eyed him but made no remark.

"They're squabbling over the dainty bits," commented Birskett, as a sudden altercation broke out from the men's club.

After he had tested the binding on the rocket he leaned it against the wall; selected a slender bamboo on which the thatch was bound, cut it so that a knot blocked one end and the other was left open, and began to whittle holes after the fashion of a flute. Then he took stock of their porters' ammunition. They all four had full bandoliers. The loose cartridges in the haversacks were express cartridges and in addition both whites had their belts full, besides a supply for the revolvers.

Still slower the violet shadows crept on. It was the longest day either man could recollect, yet neither grumbled. When the sun began to peer under the cloud of the mountain Birskett woke up. The long *shauri* had ceased; many more men had joined the cluster of women, who never tired of watching the whites, or their dinner, as you like.

"Now, doc, time to stick on the war paint." He explained at length. Then, addressing their men, instructed them in their parts.

Sitting well within the hut he began to blow on the primitive flute. The result was scarcely soothing to white ears, but seemed sufficiently interesting to the crowd, for they began, the women particularly, to press forward curiously. The weird squealing and squawling carried on the still, hot air.

The sun's rays turned the pinnacles of the hut to golden pagodas and bloodied the cloud tops. Still came the magical squealing and wailing from within the hut. At last night came. The twilight glimmered and was gone.

"Now, doc, get busy!" whispered Birskett. *"Tooooo—looooo—oooooo!* That's it! Shove on my veil. *Ooooooow—looooooo!* Stick your finger through so's I can blow! *Meeeeee-oooooow! looooo—looooo—tooooo!* Now give 'em a shot with the limelight. *Looooo!"*

The sweeping torch revealed bronze face after face, flashing on teeth and spears and charms. Came a perceptible grunt.

"Fine! that's getting 'em! *Tooooo! looooo! Tooo!* Light up behind my back! *Tooooo!* Give the boys theirs! *Meeeee —oooow!"*

There was a glow of a match within the hut and five red hot points moved in the gloom while the flute screamed angrily. Smothered squeals echoed. A blinding light struck out and showed five men with fire in their mouths and two whose masked faces resembled vast white stones. The torch shifted. Fires glowed and moved. Came a chorus of deep grunts.

"That's got 'em going! Touch off the rocket, doc!"

A red fire moved and more fire began spitting like an angry wild cat. Simultaneously with the explosion burst a shrill

hiss and a whirling scream as the fire shot into the stars.

Sounded the scampering of bare feet. In the light of the bursting rocket above them came the clank of dropping weapons and of coughs forced from contracted bellies.

"Now let the band play!"

Six glowing red embers began to move silently through the village: a white glare darted, showing here the pop-eyes of a woman; there, disappearing feet; beyond, flying shoulders.

"Matana! *Mwiti! Jangu!*" (Loads! Come!) said the voice of the doctor in the darkness.

Puffing heartily at his cigar Matana turned off to the left.

"You're crazy, doc!" snapped Birskett. "We can't take the loads."

"I'm only going to get a few necessary things," said the doctor and marched on, holding Matana by the arm.

SWEARING beneath his breath Birskett followed. Suddenly in the darting ring of white appeared a wrinkled chest with the shin bone of a man. The circle flashed upwards revealing an ancient face contorted with anger or fright and yelling, but it was advancing. Cries answered him. A red flame and a crash doubled him up like breaking a gun.

"Ask this idiot where the loads are?" came the unruffled voice of the doctor.

"*Aluwa? Aluwa?*" (Where is it?) he repeated.

"Quick, doc," said Birskett, "as soon as they get over the shock they'll be on us!"

Matana, a bit rattled, turned into a compound. The torch revealed the loads scattered around the hut. The doctor selected one of several special cases made of steel, damp-proof and white-ant proof.

Swiftly opening it he expertly snatched this and that package, thrusting each into the boys' haversacks while they and Birskett stood smoking cigars with their rifles ready, facing the yowls, cries and commotion without. A piercing squeal rose and dropped to a moaning howl.

"They've found Noah," said Birskett. "Get a hustle on, doc."

Calmly the doctor opened another box and selected more packages. Then he sighed heavily.

"Right. Go on!"

"Switch that torch around," said Birskett as he came up.

The light revealed a medley of bronze figures and faces. Some were skulking behind huts; others were mouthing like lunatics, spears in hand. Yet they flinched at the electric beam and scuffled back as the six advanced.

As they went through the gate a spear sang between Birskett and Zapoko.

"Volley!" commanded Birskett, and five rifles crashed into the village followed by a belated crack from the doctor's express.

Howls and screeches arose.

They hastened on through the grass. Ninety yards away they stopped to place another broadside into the village, the tops of which they could see against the stars.

"That'll discourage 'em some as well as the evil spirits for to-night," said Birskett. "Now, for the mountains! Gosh, you've sure got some nerve, doc!"

"Oh!" said Kirkton apologetically. "You see I really needed those things. I told you that."

IX

THE hereditary terror of an unknown phenomenon is slowly being eradicated from the civilized animal. A telephone, which would have been attributed to magic by our own forefathers, to the modern man is no more astonishing than his penknife. To see any given act as another person sees it is extremely difficult; but for a white man with a mind which has been molded by generations of civilization, it is nigh impossible to understand the terror of a savage.

So it was that the effect upon the natives had been far more than Birskett had imagined or dared to hope. The ground had been well manured previously. Ever since the death of the chief from sleeping sickness there had been jealousy and strife between a faction led by Zofulo, the father, and that under the sway of Bafakoki, the witch-doctor.

According to the custom of this tribe a chief should have been elected from among the most renowned warriors and hunters, but since the killing and eating of the white man the power of Bafakoki had grown enormously. Had the dread disease not stricken, as he had prophesied, a man, woman or child, for many moons afterwards? No one could deny it. Now he aspired to be chief as well as witch-doctor

and had by his newly acquired reputation staved off the selection of a chief.

Then had appeared more whites. Bafakoki rejoiced and sought eagerly to repeat his last culinary triumph and thus to clinch his power for good. But a new factor came, one on which he had not counted—greed; for the loads represented wealth such as no savage among them dreamed existed in the world.

He was ancient and withered; had more native wealth than he could eat or drink and four wives too many for his management; yet just as with many whites, the older he became the more wealth he desired. He was not sophisticated enough to say that he wanted it for his children.

What was in the loads and what they could do with them never occurred to any of the savages. Everything appertaining to a white man was rare and desirable—therefore exchangeable, therefore wealth.

Thus greed heartened the opposition faction. Bafakoki, as they knew well, would take nine-tenths for himself. Each warrior saw in himself, in his own esteem of his prowess in war and the chase, an indisputable reason why he should be chief and grab the wealth.

Even Zofulo developed a strong sense of injustice, claiming that as no new chief had been elected, the wealth was his as the father of the dead chief. So all day they had argued with each other and with Bafakoki who, to his rising alarm, saw his authority slipping away, and strove to use his prestige as a most mighty and murderous witch-doctor to frighten into them some respect for the constitutional law.

He threatened and cajoled, but to no purpose. Greed for the moment was stronger than superstitious fears. Then desperation gave him a brain wave, an obvious argument which he wondered himself why he hadn't thought of before. The loads, as everybody knew, were tabu until the devils pertaining to every stranger's person or goods were exorcised by a witch-doctor. Although there were other witch-doctors, they were merely, so to speak, small-town practitioners. Then had occurred the uproar that the whites had heard.

That move was an ace; he withdrew the compromises made and secured two-thirds of the loads. Then, very self-satisfied, he retired to his hut to prepare incantations and magical brews as a dressing for the white victims of the feast.

In the hut he heard the first squawl of the flute. He listened. He could not recognize it as beast or man. An uneasy squirmy feeling began to grow in his withered paunch. He struggled to retain his dignity. His wives were watching and trembling. He heard the grunts.

"*Ahuu!*" came in a terrified whisper through the hut wall.

He went. After all, *Ahuu* and spirits generally were his job. But when he saw men breathing fire and smoke, and something noiseless and without touch smote him in the face—the arc of the torch—he quit.

Possibly, knowing more about devils, he intended to abandon these foolish creatures to their fate which, if mortal, might mean a bigger share of the loads for him. In his hut he cowered and literally squawked incantations, the primitive form of prayer. The hiss and the squeal of the rocket nearly killed him with fright.

Grunts, whispers, and the scuffle of feet and the dread voices of the devils speaking sounded; then a muffled cry.

So strange is human nature that that cry galvanized him into action, wrenched him to his wabbly feet, and propelled him out; for a man had said the devils were going to take the loads.

He never had time to be scared any more.

At first his fellows could not understand that he had been killed; one kills with a spear or poison. Some gathered around him in the dark, bawling idiotic questions; others ran and hid. Zofulo and some of the bravest, drawn by the same magnet, rushed after the whites, each wildly urging his brother to attack. When the torch ray came again they flinched, half-expecting to fall as Bafakoki had done. They hadn't yet realized that he was dead.

When the whites marched to the gate some of the savages were relieved that they hadn't whisked the loads into the air.

The volley paralyzed them, the noise and the flame stabs were veritable demons. The stricken bawled and howled with fright and pain. A man cried that he was dead. Then the idea of the striking death hit them; they grasped what had happened in some mysterious way to Bafakoki. A dying man in his agony clutched at the legs of another. Crazy with fright the

man stabbed at his neighbor. At that moment came the second volley. They went mad, screaming and hacking each at his fellow.

The dim moon rose on maimed, dying and dead and others cowering in huts and corners. When the mountain twilight came bronze figures, writhing and stiff, sprawled all over the village in pools of blood, and from the huts came the moans of the women, the whimpering of children and the bass mutter of men. The sounds died gradually. Men began to peep out of, to emerge from, their huts. But the sun was plowing the usual way through the peak clouds. Women followed, seeking their men.

Those alive and not mortally hurt went by habit, yet fearfully, to the club house. Zufolo was there. The white devils were gone. That was the first topic. Some ventured to scout. They began to discuss the previous evening. Perhaps they had been bewitched. Why else had they fought one with the other? Ehh! And perhaps after all they had been really white men. Perhaps Bafakoki's magic had been weak? Who knows? Ehh!

Talk is often like what is miscalled Dutch courage. They continued busily. But something was already in a convalescent state and was beginning to pluck at their minds, firmly but gently. Presently the lead came. Another witch-doctor suggested that perhaps it was just as well that Bafakoki had gone—he had been no good as a sorcerer anyway, otherwise the whites would not have escaped.

Others immediately recalled cases where the departed had sadly lacked virtue. The rival witch-doctor was rather surprized and tickled by the success of the suggestion. He enlarged upon it. By the time the shadows were appreciably beginning to dwindle it was unanimously decided that the loss of the whites and the slaughter of their brothers was Bafakoki's fault.

Then burst out the subject which was eating them all—the loads!

They grew bolder as they talked. The bright young medico saw himself as the successful candidate for Bafakoki's place. He boasted that his magic was stronger than Bafakoki's. Ehh! Even than the whites! He would exorcise the devils from the loads.

AMID a crowd without the compound, momentarily expecting him to vanish or to be blown sky high, he sprinkled a magical brew. His was strong medicine! Ehh!

They crowded in then, but respectfully left the powerful wizard to handle the loads. In one of the cases, carelessly left open by the doctor, he found a pot, and in the pot a curious looking substance; long like strips of slender white bamboo.

The stuff broke easily in his hand. With an eye to future constituents he generously handed it around like a child with some candy, and actuated by the same infantile instinct, they each and all put some in their mouths to see if it was food. It was cyanide of potassium, carried by the doctor for his bug-killing bottle——

In a deserted village lie skeletons scattered about; here and there, among what once were huts, pokes up an edge of a rusty case.

Years after, when an expedition of the British Museum passed through that country, the natives fled on sight; not one could be coaxed out of the grass or jungle. The whites wondered why.

X

NEARLY forty miles away the two Americans were sleeping in a thicket of jungle grass, unwitting that their precious loads had been abandoned by the savages in their panic stricken hegira; although little advantage would have been theirs even had they known, lacking any hope of finding porters.

At the opening of a primitive shelter made by knotting the tall grass at the ends, squatted Zapoko on guard with eyes and ears. From the look of the land when morning had dawned they had discovered that the distance to the mountain slopes was very much farther than they had estimated; also, that an arm of the swamp circled right around between them and the high ground. As yet they had not been able to determine how far. About three o'clock Birskett awoke and sat up, scratching his half grown beard.

"Gosh, I've got an almighty thirst!" he muttered.

"*Leta Chai*," (Bring some tea,) he began and stopped.

For a moment he had forgotten. He

looked at Kirkton's naturally pallid face smeared with a dark growth of two days, for he had always shaved punctiliously. The doctor lay curled up, sleeping peacefully.

"Poor old doc," he mused with a grin, "guess he'll have to get used to face-moss now. Lord, won't he swear! Wonder how he'll take it all around?"

He stared thoughtfully at the mountain peaks above the grass.

"A fellow will want a wopping big sense of humor to stick it out for the next few weeks or months if I can read any Injun signs when he ain't even got enough to keep a toy boat afloat," he thought. "Still, he'll make it all right once he gets the big idea. Well, I guess my belly says I'd better take a chance and try to scare up some perambulating dinner.

"*Jangu, Kubi!*" he said, shaking the boy awake. "*Tugende tuige.* (Let's go hunting.) *Mangu! Leta mundu. Aluwa?* (Quickly. Bring the shotgun. Where is it?) *Kuma muliro,* (Light a fire,)" he added to Matana.

In future there would be no white man's grub or drink. They'd have to shoot to fill their bellies—at any rate until they found Stoutt's folk, as he called them in his mind.

They had not remarked any village or signs of natives, and even if there were any about they needed food badly; for as they had refused to stop for supper the previous day, they hadn't had a bite since the day before, and the doctor had not eaten much then. But before starting Birskett mounted the hillock and cautiously reconnoitered.

"Darned queer," he commented, "that those fellows don't get on our trail! They must be madder than scalded cats!"

The country, which was a jumble of broken hills ending toward the mountains in swamp, didn't look very promising for buck; but they might flush a bird of some sort. In the long grass the buck would hear or smell them long before they could see him.

They made down hill. Once a bird got up from a clump of bushes, but Birskett saw that it was a carrion eater.

"Darn it," he muttered to himself, as he lowered the gun, "sha'n't get anything, or if we do it'll be too late to cook before dark," for he didn't wish to advertise their presence by night for miles around. A touch on his arm and the black finger of Kubi showed him that something was moving some hundred yards away through a patch of long grass. He grabbed the rifle and waited.

A black tip appeared and sent both of them to earth. Followed, with the pompous majesty of an alderman, a rhinoceros whose hide was a dirty gray color.

"Now," cried Birskett, "if that isn't all the darned luck! And by —— he's white too! Oh, you prize beauty!" he muttered wrathfully. "And to think I can't spare a bullet for you without scaring any buck there may be to Kingdom Come!"

Fortunately, or unfortunately, Birskett was almost in doubt which, what air there was stirring was moving from the beast toward them; a rhino, shortsighted and suspicious, will, nine times out of ten, charge blindly at any smell from a camp fire to his own dung. However, he moved on slowly and disappeared. They made back tracks and continued their hunt.

An hour later they were rewarded by bagging a young *pookoo* which, although not very delicate eating, is quite good with hunger sauce. They cut him up and divided the hind quarters and the liver and kidneys between them, for without pepper and salt they had no means of curing the meat to carry with them as biltong.

Well content, they set out for camp, reckoning on half an hour at least after they got there to cook before sunset. Paying more attention to possible roving natives or their friend the rhino, they missed the right hill, and failed to see the camp which was well hidden, until they were upon it.

As they were striding up the incline came a bright flash. In a few paces Birskett grinned. Squatting before a small mirror which had reflected the western sun was the doctor calmly shaving.

Just then Kubi's keen eyes spotted grass tops moving. He stopped and pointed. As they looked, a huge form appeared, moving rapidly. He saw Matana crouched over the fire and the two Sudanese rise and heard their yells. The next instant the bulk seemed to pass right over the doctor as he scraped meticulously at his chin, and vanished in the long grass.

"My God!" groaned Birskett, dropping the hind leg of buck. "He's got him!"

But as he ran, the doctor's voice was raised loud in execration, and he saw his

form rise, grab a rifle and, flapping haversacks, disappear in the wake of the rhino.

"Doc! doc!" bawled Birskett. "Come back, you idiot!"

"Good Lord!" he thought. "The beast'll get him as sure as death in this grass," and sprinted to cut him off.

He came round the hillock in time to see the furious doctor standing with his rifle, and the rhino, who had heard as well as smelt him, coming down on him like a runaway Ford truck.

Birskett dared not risk a shot because if he missed he might hit Kirkton. He stopped, holding his breath. When the form of the rhino seemed to intermingle with that of the doctor, came the report. The next instant the doctor reappeared as the brute seemed to curtsy before him and lie down at his feet.

"My heavenly forefathers!" gasped Birskett as he ran up. "Where did you learn to shoot?"

"Eh? Oh, bear," said the doctor calmly. "Vacations. But the —— brute's broken my mirror."

"Good Lord, man, but I thought you were gone for sure! How on earth did he miss you?"

"I was so mad, I don't quite know," confessed the doctor, bending over the dead rhino. "I didn't see him until he was almost touching me and threw myself aside, I suppose. But what a peculiar color he is!"

"Sure, he's a white rhino—rarer than honest folk in Broadway. We saw him away back and didn't dare shoot for fear of scaring the game. Anyway it's a shame to bag a beast you can't eat or collect. Still he surely asked for it! But we've got some meat anyway. Hungry?"

"Hungry? Man, I could eat this fellow all by myself."

By the swarming of the stars the cooking was done. They stamped out the fire and dined well, hunter fashion. Birskett half-expected that the doctor would grouch at having no salt or bread, but never a word was said. Birskett began to lose his fears.

"After all," he reflected, watching the doctor skilfully carving a lump of meat with his hunting knife, "I guess I've let my contempt for town guys carry me a bit too far—thank the good Lord!"

STRIKING over the hills directly for the mountains they hit the swamp about midnight and holding to the firmer ground struck back along the edge. But presently, as they could not make a hazard as to how far the arm of the forest extended nor of the breadth and crossing possibilities, they camped—that is, they sat down in the long grass in the middle of a skirmishing party of ants. They removed hurriedly and eloquently—and again sat down in the long grass.

"Seems to me," remarked Birskett, "that this darned country of our late friends is a kind of an island surrounded by river and swamp, which probably they're scared to death to cross on account of the pigmies. Recollect how jumpy they were down by the river? Maybe it's the *Ahuu*, as they call 'em, but more probably a combination of both. That would account for their knowing little of white men. I'm for tackling the swamp. In our condition we can't afford to fool walking around like a circus hack."

"If you think so, I'm game," said the doctor. "Probably we shall find the swamp full of flies, and possibly pigmies."

"Possibly pigmies," agreed Birskett, "and also probably flies! Oh sure!"

In the twilight they ascended the highest summit around. From the general lie of the land, Birskett's theory of the island seemed about correct. On the far mountain slope Abdul, the Sudanese, sighted a wisp of smoke.

"Stoutt's people!" exclaimed the doctor jubilantly.

"Maybe, and again maybe it ain't," said Birskett. "But you're sure a hog on optimism, ain't you, doc? Now let's see how far you can swim!"

From the look of the edge of the swamp Birskett's joke seemed true. The grass land ran into the same spinach green of treacherous slime and water as at the granite-river barrier, some fifty yards or more. Beyond the snake-like roots of the forest began, rose against the sun like a vast cavern of dense violet shadows out of which gnarled limbs, dripping humid festoons, beckoned in sinister welcome.

"There he is!" exclaimed the doctor, and there seemed to be an exultant note in the voice as a fly about the size of a common horse-fly flew past.

"*Mangu! Matana, Mutego!*" (Quick!

Matana, my trap—fly net!) But it was too late.

As they stood regarding the dank barrier of swamp, seeking a method to cross, came a shriek followed by a wild and angry chattering. Something caught their eyes near the uprising roots and a vague body like a moving strip of the swamp slowly vanished into the gloom.

"Water python, I guess," said Birskett, in answer to the doctor. "Everybody seems at home and in good health anyway!"

Any attempt to wade they knew would be fatal; to swim was equally impossible; and there was no timber sufficiently solid within reach to make a corduroy passage. They began to walk along, hoping for luck. Several odd flies hovered about. As they put on their net masks, neither made remark; but Birskett was seeing the last inhabitants of those villages, and the doctor found himself recalling the symptoms.

A little after noon a tiny cape of land seemed to run out almost to the forest. And so it proved. At the extremity there was but a gap of twenty feet to the nearest of the forest roots. As they sat in the hot sun studying the problem, the doctor pointed towards the fringe of the forest, remarking:

"See that, Birskett? Some more of that extraordinary fungus we saw in the forest away back."

But Birskett swore and clapped his hand to his neck.

"Fly?" said the doctor.

"Yes," said Birskett. "I think I've got a hunch," he continued, and rose. "Here; give me a hand in case I slip."

Cautiously he waded up to his knees in the swamp edge and then began groping beneath the foul slime.

"Thought so!" he exclaimed and brought up a handful of long fibrous stuff which looked like water lily roots. "Plait 'em. Rope one of those branches. Drag ourselves over."

"But clothes and guns?"

"Make a raft of grass and tow 'em over. Some bath but—coming?"

The doctor sniffed disgustedly at the stench from the disturbed slime, his eyes wandered to the mountains, and he nodded. When they had dragged up a quantity of roots they retired to the grass hillocks behind to avoid the stench and the flies.

With a knife Birskett made slits in the tough fiber stuff and turned in each end several times, a crude splicing, and tested each link by making the boys haul on it. But it was a long job and the daylight had gone before it was finished.

Next morning, after completing the clumsy lariat, Birskett prepared for the attempt. The primitive rope was stiff and greasy in the hand, even after drying in the sun. The first throw fell short, and the second; the third struck the huge forest limb he was aiming for, but failed to grip. Twenty-seven times he tried.

"I'll get you yet, you son-of-a-gun!" he cried and, dripping sweat, sat down. "I've got it, but how the —— am I going to get stones?"

"Stones?"

"Yep. Bolas. Greaser stunt. Only thing that'll do it."

But there seemed to be no stones within a hundred miles. It took him exactly thirty minutes to surmount that obstacle by filling his two boots with earth.

"The Lord grant one doesn't slip off," he muttered as he swung the substitute balls over his head, "or I'll have to hop for the rest of the road!"

At the third cast the weighted boots caught, wrapping even the stiff fiber around the limb and jamming themselves in the branches. They tested it by hanging on and pulling all together. In the mean time the boys had made a thick raft of long grass bound together with the fibrous roots.

Birskett stripped and grimaced at the doctor.

"Fly or no we'll have to take a chance," said he, as he slung his revolver holster around his bare neck. "I'll be some sweet smelling violet by the time I get there!"

"Are there crocs?" said the doctor.

"Perhaps."

"Snakes?"

"Shouldn't be surprized. Ough! —— the beast!" A tsetse had dug its proboscis into the flesh of his hip. "Now for the interstate, twenty yards championship!"

Holding the flap of the holster between his teeth and letting the lariat coil between his legs he plunged, and went hand over hand so swiftly that his body scarcely sank in the dense slime deeper than his thighs.

He looked in the glow of the sun, with green limbs and front, like some strange half-human creature of the forest as he

began to clamber on to the great protruding root. He halted for a moment to adjust his revolver and disappeared into a mass of foliage seeking a better platform.

Suddenly his gun whipped out and almost following the report a part of the very limb on which the lariat was attached seemed to detach itself and fell writhing into the swamp. Four more shots followed swiftly.

The doctor stark, with the root lariat in his hands, paused on the brink, watching the commotion in the slime.

"Gang's all here!" Birskett shouted. "Come on, doc. It's all right! This fellow's as dead as cold pork. It's only his emotions!"

XI

ON A rump of land jutting out from a sheer cliff of the mountain was a village of some five hundred huts, like brown men squatting with their backs against a wall. From a knoll some hundred yards away was a view of the Ituri forest rolling a thousand miles to the western horizon. There, beneath a great Bombax tree, nigh a hundred feet high and a great mass of scarlet flowers, was the green tent of a white man's camp.

By the time the sun had escaped the veil of the mountain peaks, the shadows were so small that the people called themselves the Tiny Children of the Mountain, although in stature they were by no means short. The idea was derived partly from the dim sense of insignificance in the presence of colossal nature, and partly from the fact that their souls—their shadows—began their lives—days—in so diminutive a size.

Squatted on his hams upon a leopard skin in the shelter of the club house in the center of the village was the chief of the Tiny Children of the Mountains, a powerfully built man of middle age, dark-bronze of skin, with a tuft of black wool on his chin and a safety razor suspended by a circlet of beads upon his carven chest. Over his thighs was a greasy shirt, which had once been white, tied by the arms around his waist like a wrestler's embrace.

Near him, but a little to one side, was an ancient, withered and bony of body and limbs. Worked into the scanty wool of his skull were withered bits of brownish purple specked with dull red like streaks of arterial blood. His skinny legs and hips were enveloped in a ragged pair of lavender silk drawers, and on one foot was a gray sock with green clocks, carefully tied up with fiber.

Facing them was a group of some twenty-five younger men, mostly clad in monkey skins over the loins.

Boko, the chief, was talking to a young man, carrying a short stabbing-spear.

"And thou hast spoken with these whites, O Zako?"

"*Mwami* (Chief)!"

"Thinkest thou they are brothers of the Giver of Life?"

"*Simanyi, Mwami,* (I don't know, chief,) for never have mine eyes seen nor mine ears heard him."

"True. What manner of men be they?"

"One is bald of face with eyes like unto a bird's, and the other is a great man, bearded, who laughs. Their speech is soft and their words are gentle. With them are three men who come they say from where the sun rises, many moons from here. Lubo and I, hunting in the mountain, first saw them coming from the forest. We went to greet them and led them to the village of my father. Their limbs were like reeds and their bellies stuck to their bones, so that we fed them."

"You did well, O Zako," returned the chief, "for maybe they are indeed brothers of the Giver of Life. Who may know? Of what spake they?"

"They spoke of the road and the wild men and craved permission to come to visit the great chief, Boko. Ehh!"

"Have they great wealth, O Zako?" spoke up a man sitting in the front rank.

"Nay, nought have they except that which they carry. They tell of the savages beyond the forest who sought to eat them and stole their goods, but they overcame them with their magic."

"Enough! When they shall come, bring them to me."

The chief turned to the general group.

"What think you then, O my children, of this other white man?"

"His smell is not good, O my father," returned a lusty man in the van. "He comes with a double tongue seeking that which is forbidden."

"Ehh!" added Zano, a young man wearing a broken gun-metal wrist watch. "And he is not of the same tribe as the Giver of Life. This I know, for did not the Sacred One

teach me His Tongue? He spoke as a bird speaketh, but this man speaks like to a great bleating, even as the bald one of four eyes, of whom He said, 'Beware, for this man is no brother of mine.' This is a brother of the one of no hair and four eyes. Ehh! This I know."

He held up his hand. "Gave He not me this powerful charm the day I slew the mountain leopard? Ehh! Was I not of His family?"

"Ough! Ough!" grunted others, and even the chief paid attention to his words.

"Let us slay him!" cried out another young man from the rear, followed by savage "Oughs!" of approval.

"Nay," responded Boko gravely, "for that is against the laws of the Giver of Life. Thou, Zano, what said He concerning the matter?"

"He said," returned Zano with the air of a child proudly repeating a lesson by rote, "that never must we turn our spears against the race of the whites; that we must have straight tongues and white hearts in our dealings with them; that the thief shall be punished by us and the goods be returned to the white man; that food and drink shall be for the white man as for our brothers; that we shall listen to the words and the ways of the white man for therein is much profit and wisdom."

"Ough! Ough!" grunted some of his fellows in approval, but there were others that murmured, saying: "Slay him! Slay him!"

"Cease thy idle cries!" suddenly shrilled the ancient. "Do you dare to know the words of the Giver of Life, you sons of wild men? Do you dare to vomit the wisdom of Him? His tongue shall rot between his teeth! His guts shall be spilled as water! His women shall shrivel as thatch grass beneath him! His spears shall be reeds! His chest shall grow hag's breasts! His soul shall be torn by the claws of *Ahuu!* I have spoken!"

A sonorous murmur of horror rose from the recalcitrants at the threat of the witch-doctor who relapsed into immobility almost as startlingly as he had broken it. After a pause, as it to allow the fumes of the curse to evaporate, said the chief—

"Let the white man be brought!"

THREE youths sitting on the outskirts of the throng rose and loped down the hill. While they were gone all sat motionless. Save for the pounding of corn in many mortars and the occasional whimper of a baby or the laugh of a child, there was silence.

Twenty minutes later appeared a white man with a short, blond beard clad in white, wearing a great solar *topi* with a green puggaree, a revolver strapped around a full waist, and carrying a cane of hippopotamus hide. Behind him marched stiffly a tall native of charcoal hue carrying a green camp chair.

The white man walked through the narrow lane left for him and directed the servant to put the chair before the chief. As he sat he wrinkled his nose with a disgusted "Phoo" at the heat and the smell of the natives. Sharp eyes watched him and keen ears heard him. Boko and Yarazoo, the ancient witch-doctor, regarded him mutely and as expressionlessly as tree trunks.

The white man stared back at the chief arrogantly, as if trying to compel him to shift his gaze. The white man's eyelids were forced to blink, but the chief's seemed of metal.

The duel continued for perhaps three minutes, which is a long time to hold a gaze. Then the white man frowned and irritably slapped his leg with his *kiboko;* but the chief had won and all knew it.

"*Otyano!*" said the white, and he spoke as a bad-tempered boss nodding "Howdy" to a floor scrubber and he omitted the courtesy of '*Mwami*' (chief).

"*Nkalamusiza, sebo,*" (I am glad to see you, sir,) returned the chief, tonelessly neglecting the usual superlative.

A few more of the polite sentences which native etiquette demands were stated rather than spoken. Then came another silence.

"*Kirabo?*" (The present?) queried the white, as one sharply reminding another of a breach of manners.

"*Nkirabye. Webale, sebo.*" (I have seen it. Thanks, sir.)

Came another silence. The white man shifted his eyes to the graven image of the old witch-doctor and vaguely wondered what he wore in his wool; then he regarded the group of young men, each one a cast bronze statue of wide-eyed indifference.

Having, as he considered, wasted sufficient time in native fashion, he bent one knee across the other and leaning slightly forward, addressed the chief:

"Mazana, thy brother, O Boko, sent thee good tidings of me?"

"*Wao.*" (Yes.)

"His words have told thee that which I seek for?"

"*Wao.*"

"Thou hast not seen aught of the magic leaves which the white man had?"

"*Neda.*" (No.)

"Yet wast thou not a friend of the white chief?"

"*Wao.*"

"Were not these charms upon thy breast and upon those of thy men given by him?"

"*Wao.*"

"How comes it then that thou hast no knowledge of these other things that were his?"

"*Simanyi.*" (I don't know.)

"Were not these magic leaves (books) kept with most powerful charms?"

"*Simanyi.*"

"Have you got them?"

"*Neda.*"

The white man made a sucking sound of impatience, but he continued stolidly.

"*Okirabye?*" (Have you seen them?)

"*Kwerabira.*" (I have forgotten.)

"*Kulimba.*" (Don't lie to me,) snapped the white.

The chief neither deigned to reply nor did the muscles of his face budge, but the eyelids narrowed slightly. A murmurous grunt from the body of the men warned the white, who swore under his breath, uncrossed his leg and straightened up. He began again.

"How was this white man called?"

"The Giver of Life."

The white man stared hard and seemed agitated.

"Why did you give him that name?"

"Who shall know?"

Another "*thith*" of irritation escaped the white.

"But did you not know two white men?"

"*Wao.*"

"Of which speak you?"

"Not of the bald one of four eyes."

"Lörtzer!" muttered the white. Then, aloud—

"But of the other, the Giver of Life, he is dead?"

"*Ezikidi.*"

The white man was puzzled by the word which may mean "put out" or "evaporated in thin air."

"But he died here among you?" he insisted.

"*Neda! Neda!*" (Certainly not!)

"He is not dead?"

"*Simanyi, sebo.*" (I don't know, sir.)

The white paused, frowning angrily and plucked at his beard. It began to dawn upon him that he would never get any information out of them, as he had failed to do with another branch of the Tiny Children of the Mountain who had merely passed him on. He tried another tack.

"Do you know of the sleeping death?"

"*Wao, sebo!*"

"Do many of thy people die from it?"

"None, sir."

The reply seemed to excite the white out of his careful efforts to preserve a native-like restraint. He leaned forward.

"Wherefore none? Are not your neighbors eaten up in their hundreds?"

"*Simanyi, sebo.*"

An exasperated oath escaped the bearded lips and he gripped the *kiboko* as if longing to thrash the chief for his obstinacy. He glared at the immobile features of the witch-doctor. The sun caught a red streak of the head-dress, which seemed to irritate the white man the more. He restrained himself by an effort and seemed to consider. Finally he said—

"Have you heard naught of two white men who come from the river?"

"*Simanyi, sebo.*"

"Hear my words. They are white. White men shall come and they have black hearts. They are the whites who eat up the blacks in the land of *Mtesa* (Uganda.) *Wulidi?*" (Thou hast heard?)

"*Pulidi, sebo.*" (I have heard, sir.)

"Know also, O chief Boko, that he who shall bring to me the magic leaves of the Giver of Life, as you call him, shall have what price he may ask—guns he may have, with ten men's loads of bullets—*bafta* he shall have for twenty porters—I have spoken. Take my words and talk with thy head men and warriors."

The white rose.

"*Emshi,*" (Go,) he said to his servant. The latter picked up the chair, and to the chief:

"*Werabi. Mwami.*" (Good-by—see yourself—chief.)

"*Kale, weraba, sebo,*" responded Boko politely.

The eyes and heads followed the white man's progress, but no man spoke until he was out of sight.

Then broke out a hubbub of chatter among them.

"Ehh!" exclaimed Zano. "Have I not told you that he is a brother of the Bald One with Four Eyes? Is not his walk even as his like to a crane? Ehh!"

"He knoweth not gentle words," said the chief quietly, "and thou sayest, Zako, these new white men speak. Ehh!"

"Eeh!" shrilled the witch-doctor, and silence was instantly given. "The stranger hath blood and greed in his heart! Let no man bite his words. I have spoken."

"Let us slay him!" came a ferocious murmur from the body of men. "Let us slay him before evil befall us!"

"Is not the Giver of Life our father that you would disobey him?" reproved Boko gravely. "Be silent, my children!"

As he rose to dismiss the meeting a long quavering cry reached them on the warm air.

"They come! The white men come!" cried the men and rushed like school children to the gate of the village overlooking the valley. Issuing at that moment out of a clump of trees was a party of natives and with them two white men.

Twenty minutes later these two were ascending the knoll; Kirkton and Birskett, their clothes green-slimed and torn, nearly as haggard as skeletons, their faces so swollen from insect bites that they could scarcely see.

The doctor limped, and Birskett had his left arm stuck in his shirt in lieu of a sling. Breasting the hill they saw the white man's camp beneath the great scarlet Bombax tree.

"Whites, by ——" exclaimed Birskett as they both stopped.

Beneath the tent fly was a white man lounging in a chair writing.

"Say, doc, I've got a hunch who that fellow is," added Birskett quickly. "If I'm right, keep a tight mouth. Get me? Come along, let's see him."

As the man raised his head, Birskett laughed silently.

"Now what d'you know about that!" he whispered. "Your darned jackal-eared Chinaman on the boat, doc, as sure as I'm half-eaten!"

XII

BIRSKETT turned to the head man of the escorting Tiny Children of the Mountains and said in a low voice:

"Excuse us, my friends, we would speak with this white man."

"As the chief shall wish," replied the man politely. "We shall await him in the village?"

"*Neda, Neda, munange.*" (Certainly not, my friend, wait for us.)

For a moment the stranger stared uncertainly. Then his beard split in a smile and he rose, saying in stilted English but without accent:

"Ah, good morning, gentlemen! Most unexpected to find white men in these districts! Sit down if you please! One moment—yes!"

He called sharply to his servant to bring chairs. The boy came at a run with two camp stools.

"Will you, sir?" he said to Kirkton, offering the chair.

"Thanks!" said Kirkton, who was extremely tired and very glad to sit once more in a chair. Birskett straddled a stool, so that his foot was almost in contact with the doctor's.

"Yes, don't look for a bunch of whites around these parts, eh?" said Birskett, eying the host with a slight smile.

"No, certainly not," said he. "Very unusual, is it not so? You will drink, sir?" as the well trained servant placed a bottle of whiskey on the table.

"Oh, boy!" ejaculated Birskett with a laugh, and the doctor sighed.

As they tasted what seemed nectar of the gods and what they both badly needed, the man was, Birskett noted, taking stock of them minutely.

"Ah," he went on, "you have had some very bad traveling, sir? Do you come from the Congo, yes?"

"No," said Kirkton, "round from Uganda. Mighty rough going. Oh, my name's Kirkton—Dr. Kirkton—and this is Mr. Birskett."

"Oh, yes. I am Mr. van der Byl, Cornelius van der Byl of Amsterdam. I intend to explore the Ruwenzori. I believe it has never yet been explored, is it not so?"

Birskett's foot touched the doctor's toes.

"Mighty interesting!" said the former. "Guess we'll be kind of rivals. We're bound on the same track, but anyway we'll come to terms and divide the honors, Mr. van der Byl." He laughed. "Say, did you come around by Muanza and German territory or up along the lakes from the south?"

"I came, as you say, sir, by the lakes from the south—through Nyassa, is it not?"

While Birskett was holding him in conversation, the doctor's bright eyes were watching him keenly, of which he seemed to be aware. Suddenly in a pause the doctor jerked in—

"Did you ever know Dr. Lörtzer, Mr. van der Byl?"

"Lörtzer?"

Mr. van der Byl stared at the canvas ceiling in the effort to recall the name.

"No, I do not recollect that gentleman. He was a Hollander, is it not?"

"No." Birskett, watching the doctor, almost thought he was going to smile. "No. He was a well-known German scientist."

"Very interesting, yes. But why do you ask, sir, in this far country?"

"Oh," said Kirkton, "because he was around here. I thought perhaps he was a friend of yours."

"I am so very sorry, but I do not know him." Mr. van der Byl smiled. "You will please stop to lunch, is it not?"

"Sure, thanks!" cut in Birskett swiftly as he saw the doctor was in doubt whether to refuse. "But we'll have to go right up and fix our camp."

"Ah, but will you not camp beside me? I shall be most happy."

"Guess that depends on the chief," evaded Birskett, as they both rose.

"Gosh!" he murmured to the doctor, as they joined the waiting natives. "He's a bum liar, doc!"

"Are you sure he's the man you saw on the boat?"

"Sure! I wish to God you were as sure of finding the cure, doc!" said Birskett soberly. "I'd swear on fifty different kind of oaths that's he's the fellow whom I caught peeking in the port-hole that time you were cutting loose about Stoutt. As soon as he tumbled to who you were—and what you were after—he tried to frame that Uganda stunt to hold you up. Don't you get that? Now he's madder'n Hades. We've got to watch out. Van der Byl! Hollander! Doesn't the darned square-head know they call themselves Nederlanders? Amsterdam? Guess he was born on the other side of the Rhine!"

"What was his name?" inquired the doctor. "You looked it up on board."

"Sure. And you got so darned mad with me for it! Herr Doktor Adolph Friedlander." Birskett laughed.

"M'm," muttered the doctor. "Leipzig and Hamburg."

"You know of him then?"

"Heard of him. Never paid attention to your chatter on the boat, Birskett. I apologize. He's a well-known man of the tropical school."

"Then what I thought at first was right!" exclaimed Birskett. "Now his darned lying, like a tenderfoot trying to rope a steer, shows what he's after."

"I wonder he had the nerve, knowing we were on the same boat."

"Oh, a fool always reckons everybody else is a fool. I guess he figured we hadn't noticed him and anyway he'd grown a bit of a beard. But he's clean forgotten those Mongol eyes!"

"Yes, but what *is* he after? That's the point."

"What he's after wouldn't puzzle a kid with the cradle marks on him! The point is, how much and what does he know? And where'd he get it? I guess that pious thug Lörtzer talked some before you ever struck him."

"Yes, but if he did he wouldn't confess to murdering the man—even in Germany."

"Sure, but talk he did, I'll swear. Say, doc, I was that scared you'd refuse the lunch! Man but I'd nigh do red murder for a decent feed. Haven't got a rag of conscience left! Anyway he won't poison us the first round and we may get some more out of him—news I mean. Hullo, here's the chief, I guess. Wonder which one is he? The guy in the shirt or the image in the B. V. D.'s? Lord, they might have been Stoutt's! Sounds near, doc. We'll put up with the chief if we can and not let this Friedlander-Byl fellow know we've got no outfit for just as long as possible."

"Otyano munange, mwami." (Greeting, chief and friend.)

They had been led by Tamangala, the head man of the village, where they had spent two days of needed rest, to the compound of the chief, Boko, who was squatting, together with Yarazoo, beneath a small awning of palm leaves. Tamangala, murmuring greetings to his chief, remained at the gate with his men. Boko keenly scrutinized the faces of the white men as he bade them sit beside him. Yarazoo, the witch-doctor, seemed less image-like than in the club house.

AFTER the usual preliminary domestic and political inquiries the chief—for this was an informal audience—launched a series of questions regarding their journey, apparently not out of a mere native politeness but incited by the story of Zako regarding the cannibals and the loss of the white men's goods. Birskett was a little surprized by the evidence of a prejudice in their favor evinced by the manner and phrasing of the sentences.

Naturally no serious topic was touched upon by either party. When Birskett suggested that they would be glad to avail themselves, as they had no equipment, of their hosts' hospitality, he watched the chief's face. He was well-satisfied, not only by the courtesy with which Boko assured him that a hut and all that they should wish would be placed at their disposal, but by the expression of the eyes which may so often reveal the emotions of a native.

To a question whether they would like to have food and drink immediately—as the native dines only in the evening—he asked to be excused, saying they had already accepted an invitation from the strange white man, whom he took care to emphasize he did not know, by inquiring from whence he had come and what he sought. To that Boko replied that he knew him not nor his business.

Accompanied by their men they left to taste of the spoil of the enemy, as the doctor put it gravely.

"Darned decent folk!" commented Birskett, as they walked out of the village. "Did you get what he said?"

"Oh, I can follow pretty well now," said Kirkton.

"Sure, but you didn't get exactly the way he said it. That's what counts. Maybe that's something to do with Stoutt. Isn't the game to talk about him yet. But all the same we mustn't forget that this Hamburg guy got here first. Knowing we might turn up, he'd sure try to put us in the wrong somehow. Say, doc, play the same game. You sit quiet, and I'll kid him along. When a hunch strikes you, put it across. That one about Lörtzer got him going. I could see by his eyes that for a moment he wasn't sure whether we'd recognized him or not."

Friedlander they found awaiting them with the promise of a veritable feast laid upon a green table under the tent fly.

"Lordy!" murmured Birskett, licking his swollen lips. "Cocktails! And the son-of-a-gun pretends to think we're just English!"

If he hadn't been so nervously intent upon trying to play a part, Dr. Friedlander would have made quite an excellent host. By the time the lunch was finished and they were taking a liqueur brandy, even Birskett caught himself swearing that after all Friedlander was a darned good fellow. Yet they had had but two drinks.

"Sure," he muttered to himself, "any mutt would play for a sucker that way," and kicked, by way of good measure, the doctor, who looked at him in a mildly aggrieved manner.

Birskett sat bolt upright and scowled in the effort to force himself to pay attention to the conversation. He caught a peculiar glint in the green slit eyes as he heard Friedlander saying:

"I assure you, doctor, that it is most interesting. I have had great fear of catching that terrible disease, but the natives tell me that here there is no danger, is it not? Do you think that you will discover a cure, yes?"

"What's that half-witted idiot been saying?" muttered Birskett indignantly, referring to Kirkton.

"I could not possibly prophesy," the doctor said solemnly, with an unusual drawl, "but, Dr. van der Byl, if you should fall a victim, I should be very glad to experiment upon you in the sacred cause of science."

"I should be very glad, too," answered Friedlander, when a sudden choking on the part of Birskett interrupted him. He glanced sharply at Birskett, but as he seemed to be just comfortably hilarious, he continued his *tête-à-tête* with the doctor. "I suppose, doctor, that you will wish also to experiment upon the natives here, those that have the sickness."

"That's what I've come for," assented Kirkton.

"Ah, yes. But, doctor, let me warn you. These natives are not to be trusted. I have already found to my expense that they are great liars."

"Like all mankind," said the doctor sententiously.

"Of course. Ha! ha!" agreed Friedlander. "But you were speaking philosophically, is it not? I speak as a practical man, yes. The chief here is very cunning and

sly. He will promise you, but he will never do. He needs some discipline, yes, but what would you—this is not yet—um—under the supervision of the white man, is it not?"

"Sure!" burst in Birskett a bit heatedly. "Send 'em a bunch of missionaries to teach 'em to wear pants and steal, and an old hat and lie good and hard; teach their women to wear skirts and teach 'em all to get more vices than a monkey has fleas. Sure! I know civilization! Then they're all primed to sell their land for a bottle of hooch. *In vino veritas!* Get that, Mister Ban der Vyl?"

Friedlander stared slightly.

"The sun is exceedingly powerful here," commented the doctor gravely.

"Perhaps Mr. Birskett would prefer another whiskey," said Friedlander with a touch of a sneer.

"Sure, you bet!" assented Birskett. "But don't forget what I said, boy: *In vino veritas!*"

He watched Friedlander pour out his glass, a whacking dose and noticed that he gave the doctor, whom he hadn't asked, fuller measure still. He made a pretence of filling his own glass, in which still remained liquor from his first drink.

BY AN effort of will Birskett pulled himself together, but decided to keep quiet and watch. He clinked his glass and laughed uproariously and pretended to drink and choke. Then pushing his coffee cup from him, he held his head as if nigh overcome. A covert glance showed him that the doctor's eyelids were unusually heavy.

"Dope!" he muttered. "Right, son, I get you!"

After a few more casual remarks Friedlander reverted to the subject of sleeping sickness again.

"Did you stay a long time in Uganda, doctor?"

"No. Pashed right through."

"Ah, they tell me that there is a great mortality there by the Lake Victoria, is it not?"

"Yes, they told me zo," a trifle thickly. "Birskett's seen it. Ashk him."

"Ah yes," returned Friedlander, glancing at the bowed head of Birskett, whom he didn't seem particularly—and apparently excusably—anxious to question. "I wonder if they'll ever find a cure. Do you, doctor, think that they will, yes?"

"P'raps," said Kirkton, putting his hand to his eyes.

"It is dreadful, yes, ah, yes. Doctor, perhaps you can tell me something?"

"Sure."

"It is not my business, doctor, because I do not know these things, but you will excuse me, is it not?"

"Sure!" Kirkton's hand came down from his eyes; he frowned as a man would with a violent headache.

"I once heard a story of a—these natives told me that a countryman of yours came here some time ago. He was, too, a doctor, and he died here. I wonder if you have heard about him?"

"Wash his name?"

"Stoutt. D'you know him, yes?"

"Heard o' him."

Friedlander glanced at the figure resting on the table which had moved restlessly.

"Was that true, that he died, yes?"

"I dunno. Said sho."

Friedlander bent over Kirkton.

"Tell me, doctor," he said insistently, boring into his eyes, "you must know whether any of his books and papers came back to America?"

"Never heard—never heard—anyzing about it."

Friedlander sat up, lighted a cigaret, looked at the top of Birskett's head and back to the doctor sprawling in the one chair.

"Doctor," he continued, bending over him and persuasively patting his shoulder, "did you ever meet Doctor Lörtzer in America?"

"Lörtzer? Pörtzer?" began the doctor foggily. "Sheem to know name."

"Yes, you told me he was a scientist whom you'd met."

"And when I die don't bury me a-tall!" suddenly interrupted the prostrate head on the table. "But pickle ma bones in alki-alkiho-ol! Put a bot— U-gggh!"

Birskett stirred and sank back again. Friedlander regarded him. He remained quiet.

"You were saying, doctor," he continued, stooping confidingly.

"Dunno. What was I saying?"

He wriggled higher in his chair and blinked his eyes, and then catching sight of Birskett, frowned.

"We were talking about Dr. Lörtzer," reminded Friedlander quickly.

"Dr. Lörtzen?" He blinked at Friedlander. "Dunno. Whosh Dr. Börtzen?"

Friedlander straightened up, darted a look at Birskett and eyed Kirkton doubtfully. Suddenly a new idea seemed to startle him for he clutched Kirkton's shoulder and said dictatorially:

"Have you found those note-books already, doctor, yes? Do you hear? Answer me!"

He shook the shoulder imperatively.

"You have found those books?"

"I beg your pardon, Misther Van der Byl," said Kirkton, sitting up dazedly, "but I'm afraid your hospitality and the hot shun too mush."

A convulsive heave of the shoulders attracted attention to the head on the table which rose, trying to suppress a yawn, blinked at the doctor, and laughed.

"Gosh, you're sure drunk, doc!" He stood up, swayed and clutched at the table. "Lord, I'm drunk too!" he wailed in an astonished tone. "Gosh, I've never been drunk like zish shince I stole dad's whishky. Shay, doc, what about gettin' home?"

"Yesh," agreed Kirkton, "better go home."

"But, gentlemen," said Friedlander on his feet, "please to stay with me until—until your camp has arrived, I beg you, please!"

"Zanks, Misther Bylander, no place like home, sure zing. Zanks, very mush! Hey, Kubi, M'tana! *Jangu mangu!*" he bawled. "C'mon, doc. Zanks, Bylman, f'r hoshpitality! Guess too mush for us! Nozzer time, huh?"

The doctor attempting to rise from his chair nearly fell. Birskett stood back swaying and regarded him.

"Gosh, ain't he drunk!" he commented and hoo'd with laughter.

"But no, gentlemen," insisted Friedlander, anxiously aiding the doctor by the shoulder. "Please to stop until the heat is finished, yes? You must——"

"No, mush get home," affirmed Birskett. "Shee you t'morrow, ol' boy. *M'tana, wetike mwami yangu!* (Help your chief along!) T'morrow, ol' sport. C'mon, doc!"

In truth the doctor could scarcely walk and Birskett was erratic; yet he had eyes to catch an expression on Friedlander's face as, tenderly helped by their boys, they marched unsteadily in the hot, westering sun to the village.

"Darned shame," said Birskett wrathfully. "C'ming home drunk'n owls and these fell'rs never seen a drunk before. Putting us in wrong, the son of a swine. Have t'tell 'em we were shick, huh? I'm drunk, doc! Never shought o' dope."

"Wasn't dope," stuttered the doctor.

"Wasn't dope, man? What was it for the love o' Heaven?"

The doctor, leaning on Matana's sympathetic arm, halted swaying in front of the compound of their allotted hut, and said solemnly:

"Wasn't dope. Not susha fool. Ninety shix pershent alcohol! Shaw bottle inshide tent."

XIII

THAT arm of forest swamp had taken them nine days to cross, nine days of continual fight to overcome obstacles, aqueous, vegetable, animal and reptilian. Their food was raw monkey or parrot, for in that weeping jungle where there was not a patch of dry land, nothing would burn. Without hatchets they had been forced to make their way ape-fashion, creeping and dragging their guns and haversacks over tangled undergrowth of vines, and clambering from bough to bough with hands that were not simian.

Kubi fell off a gnarled root, which served as a bridge, and was nearly suffocated in the slime. Hastily retiring from what he had mistaken in the perpetual twilight for a moss-covered branch, Birskett was caught by the hips between the fork of two boughs, and the doctor, sprawling on another, blew off a snake's head within a foot of him. Abdul, one of the two Sudanese, made a similar error in judgment and died in ten minutes. They divided his precious haversacks among them.

The nights had been spent clinging in upper branches, where their ears became attuned to the dread nocturnal anthem: ominous slithers, awful shrieks smothered in muttering weeping darkness; flurries of wings and angry chatterings, mysterious dull splashes, squashing sounds of a heavy body moving, the lugubrious howling of some monkey at the moon barely discernible through the plaited roof. Snatches of nightmare sleep were stolen between spells

of pawing hopelessly to drive away the myriads of mosquitoes; for the nets were soon in shreds. Poisonous spiders and huge centipedes swarmed.

"AIN'T you ashamed of yourself, doc?" said Birskett that evening as they sat over their fire in the compound suffering from acute headaches.

"A small quantity of liquor would have a powerful reaction upon any man who had gone through the experiences of the last fortnight," replied Kirkton. "Do you realize that we must have taken about three ounces of pure alcohol?"

"But why didn't you shout when you tumbled?"

"Too late. That was when he went inside to get some more cigarets. His medicine case was on his bed and on the floor was the bottle. He dared not use a drug knowing that I, as a medical man, would have detected it. No—merely alcohol!"

"We got drunk and that's all there is to it. Anyway, I'm darned glad we did, for he's sure given his game away now. He evidently is after those notes of Stoutt's which Lörtzer stole, where he hopes, as Lörtzer did, to find the secret of the cure. I guess that's about how the land lies."

"One thing," said Kirkton, "he doesn't know what we're after, except of course the cure, and doesn't know where and how Stoutt died. He's been here a few days. I wonder these natives haven't put him right on that."

"Sounds funny," admitted Birskett. "We're due for a formal *shauri* to-morrow, so maybe we'll get wise to something else. But these are Stoutt's people all right. The old guy with the B. V. D.'s and the chief with the shirt and another fellow with a wrist-watch, pretty well prove that. Now all we've to do is to trot right up the mountain and get hold of poor Stoutt's remains, and then it's up to you, doc."

"M'm," muttered the doctor, staring moodily at the fire. "If only I had those loads here. I can't do much with this portable equipment."

"Cheer up, doc. Maybe we can get those fellows to go back for 'em. Ummum, though, that'll mean a fight, I guess, and we haven't got any dough to stir these boys up with, and anyway the outfit may have been mussed up by now, although I don't think those man-eating guys would dare touch 'em. Magic and that stuff. As for this slit-eyed son-of-a-gun I vote we leave him alone, see what he'll do next until we get a chance to hand him one in return. Shouldn't be surprized if he gets really ugly if he can't get what he wants. If Lörtzer didn't stick at murder I don't see why his twin brother should."

The following morning Birskett was watching the doctor painfully trying to scrape his face.

"Looks mighty bad, the doc," he commented to himself. "Hang-over I guess, but I hope he ain't going to get sick now when he's right in touch almost."

When the first rays of the sun were striking the far distant Congo hills a native came to summon them to the audience. He was Zano, the young man wearing the wrist-watch, of which he was inordinately proud. Birskett, who was certain that it had been a present from Stoutt, asked him from whom he had got it.

"From the Giver of Life," answered Zano.

"Who was the Giver of Life, my friend?"

"He who dwelt among us. He who has *zikide* (gone out)."

Birskett did not push the matter, waiting to get the sense from conversation.

"Sure he was Stoutt," he told Kirkton, "but the phrase puzzles me. Doesn't usually mean 'dead,' and I've never heard it applied to a man."

Taking Kubi and Matana with them, although they had no stools to carry, they made their way to the chief, whom they found squatting in the club shelter; beside him was the witch-doctor, Yarazoo. After the usual little set speeches Birskett merely talked again about the journey and the cannibals, which seemed to interest them. From Boko they learned that that tribe was a branch of the Muamba who lived on the other side of the river farther to the west, and were addicted to cannibalism, which the Children of the Mountain despised intensely.

Later Birskett brought up the subject of ways and means, asking the chief if he would send a messenger for them to Uganda and whether he would trust them until the man could return with a *safari* of goods.

"Whatever my brothers wish shall be done," returned Boko, and from the body of the natives rose grunts of approval.

"What my brothers shall want for food let them but speak."

"Get that, doc?" whispered Birskett. "I'll bet that's poor old Stoutt's doing!"

He continued vague conversation for some time and then gently approached the subject of sleeping death.

"No, our people did not suffer from that sickness," said Boko, "but other tribes were nearly eaten up with it."

"My God!" murmured the doctor. "That practically proves Stoutt *did* find a cure! Ask him about it, Birskett."

"Do my brothers make magic against it?" he inquired.

"It is the magic of the Giver of Life," answered Yarazoo in his squeaking treble.

"Did he give you magical medicine, my friend?"

The doctor was leaning tensely forward, straining to understand every word. But there was no reply.

"Were you in the time of your fathers eaten by this plague?" put in Birskett quickly, knowing that he had struck a tabu of some sort.

"*Wao.* We were devoured as the lizard eats flies."

"The medicine of the white man is all-powerful if he be of our tribe," said Birskett.

"*Wao! Wao!*" came an emphatic affirmative.

Birskett then dropped the topic and shifted to hunting.

"Do your women and warriors still go even into the swamp?"

"Why not?"

"We ask," said Birskett mendaciously, "that we may know if it be safe to go hence hunting."

"This man, Zano," said Boko, "shall go with you whenever you shall so will it."

"These are Stoutt's people all right," said Birskett as they walked back to their hut at the other end of the village. "The shooting bluff was to find out whether they connect the fly with the disease, but apparently they don't."

"Oh my God!" said the doctor. "Just to think that it's right here under our noses! Couldn't you ask 'em where he's buried or left or whatever they would do with his remains?"

"No, that's why I shut up. They've got some sort of a tabu about him now. Probably promoted him into a god or something. That's why they wouldn't reply to the direct question whether he had given 'em some medicine. I've got a hunch we'd best say nothing about it. Scout around along the hills up there for his shack. They wouldn't have any reason to destroy it—and by ——! If they have deified him they've probably not dared to touch the bodies of any of 'em. Gosh! that's the great idea! But we'll rest up for a few days to get fit again."

"Why didn't you put in something," said the doctor wearily, "about that Friedlander fellow?"

"Because I suddenly guessed that he's been busy knocking us as he was knocking them, so we'd better play the other game. If he comes nosing around—as he will—we'll bump him off."

Outside the entrance to the compound, which was fairly large, was the remaining Sudanese, Zapoko, on his hams. He rose as the whites came up and said:

"Mwami, the white man is within. He said he would await you."

Birskett glanced swiftly at the hut and swore. Then he sprinted across the sand on his toes and literally dived through the low door. Kirkton, following, heard a startled exclamation in German and Birskett loudly cursing some one.

"How dare you make such a statement?" came Friendlander's high tones. "I tell you I come to wait for you, yes. You think that a white man will stop in the sun?"

"Stop in ——!" roared Birskett. "What were you doing poking your —— nose into that satchel? And you call yourself a white man!"

"You insult me, sir! You accept my hospitality and——"

"To —— with your darned hospitality! I know all about that, you darned—darned Hollander, and you'll get more than insulted if you don't get out and darned well stop out!"

As the doctor stooped to enter, Friedlander nearly knocked him down as he shot out in a hurry. Birskett came on his heels.

"Caught the darned scut opening your satchel, doc!" he exclaimed.

"I tell you, Doctor Kirkton, that——"

"That'll do! Get out! What I say goes. Understand that?"

"But, Herr Doktor," began Friedlander, "you can not believe that I——"

"I have every confidence in Mr. Birskett," retorted Kirkton coldly, and settled the matter by crawling into the cool of the hut.

"Right, is it not?" snapped Friedlander. "I will make you pay for this! I will——"

"Oh, get out!" roared Birskett, "or I'll throw you over the fence with one arm!"

Friedlander went, muttering to himself.

"Wasn't the boy's fault," said Birskett joining the doctor. "He can't be expected to suspect every white of being a darned thief. Somehow I suspected something right off from what he was trying to dig out of you yesterday. D'you recollect, doc? About your having found Stoutt's note-books. Sure I was drunk, but my memory ain't so bad. Couldn't see clearly in this gloom, but the son-of-a-gun was surely putting down that satchel there in a —— hurry. Yes, by ——, look! It's been opened! The rat!"

"I suppose," said the doctor slowly, "he will try to buy the natives to turn against us now. M'm. May be very awkward, but anyway we know how we stand."

"I should worry! Say, doc——"

"Goo' mornin' sah!"

"W-who the Sacred Henry—" stuttered Birskett, staring at a head blocking the light.

"Goo' night, sah!" continued the voice, as the body followed into the hut.

"Suffering snakes! it's that fellow—say, d'you speak English?"

"Yes, yes, yes, yes!" asserted Zano, and continued rapidly, showing his teeth. "Goo' boy! Goo' night! Goo' morning! Thatz fine! Thatz fine!"

"Sure, it's fine!" replied Birskett. "I get you, son. How're you feeling, huh?"

"Thatz fine! Thatz fine!" repeated Zano delightedly. Birskett laughed uproariously. Then leaning forward he touched the broken watch on the man's wrist.

"That's fine, huh?"

In the glare from the door he saw Zano's face sober instantly.

Birskett began to speak in Luganda. Zano immediately warmed up again and stated very proudly that the chief had placed the two whites in his especial charge and he had come to know whether there was anything his dear friends desired. Birskett talked for a little and dismissed him by merely remarking that they were still weak and tired and would like to rest for a few days.

"That's Stoutt's boy all right, doc!" said Birskett when Zano had gone. "That's where he learned that parrot stunt."

"Possibly," assented the doctor, "but the best evidence is probably, 'That's fine!' That must have been Stoutt's pet phrase. I wonder whether we could persuade him to help us?"

"M'm. M'm. That'll maybe be a tough proposition, for if there's some darned tabu to do with it they're as obstinate as a Louisiana mule. Anyway he'll keep Mister darned van der Friedlander away."

During the three days that they remained quietly enjoying the rest which they so badly needed they neither saw nor heard from Friedlander. The food was, for native fare, astonishingly good; another proof probably of Zano's knowledge of white men's tastes was the profusion of eggs and chickens and goat's milk supplied them, for the native usually doesn't seem to care for eggs, keeping them rather to produce chicks; even chickens are usually only eaten on feast days.

THE young man liked to come and talk with the white men. He would have a dozen or more warriors and women squatting in the compound and by his frequent chattering, Goo' night. Thatz fine! Goo' mornin', was evidently gaining much prestige as speaking the white man's language.

Birskett tried on these occasions to get an inkling of their attitude to Stoutt and information of the use of the cure he had evidently given them; but the subject was always met by a polite—

"*Simanyi, sebo,*" (I don't know, sir,) and if persisted in, by complete silence.

Birskett tried to point out that whatever stock of medicine had been given them could not last forever.

Silence.

Would they not want the white brothers of the same tribe as the Giver of Life—the reason of the name was plain now—to make more for them?

Silence.

"We'll never get anything out of 'em!" said Birskett confidently to the doctor. "It's that darned tabu business. They'd all die out again for want of the injection——"

"Couldn't be an injection," objected the

doctor. "Who would administer the needle?"

"Well, whatever it is, rather than break the rules of the tabu by mentioning his sacred name or revealing the cure to any living being."

Kirkton broodingly regarded the glare of the door.

"Maybe this man doesn't know, nor any of the others. Stoutt may—for political reasons or something to keep well in with them—have only told the witch-doctor fellow. Maybe he's got the secret or the supply—same thing. Why not tackle him?"

Birskett laughed.

"Last person on earth, man! If your hunch is right it's worse than ever. He's in the profession; he'd rather be cut to pieces than give up the secret and lose his prestige!"

"Obstinate idiot!" grumbled Kirkton. "Can't he be made to see that it's for the benefit of mankind?"

"Nothing doing with any of 'em," insisted Birskett; "it's tabu—their religion—and any boob knows there's no arguing about a religious conviction. That's all there is to it."

"Good Lord, I only want to rediscover it for the benefit of us all and Stoutt? It's Stoutt's honor, if he ever cared for such empty stuff, although I don't think he did. Anyway his people need the cash. Can't you work these wretched people on these lines?"

"That's good stuff, doc, but nothing doing with these guys. They're too mighty human for that. You'd have as tough a job trying to convince this Friedlander guy!"

"Good God!" groaned the doctor. "I'd give my life to get it."

He paused and added solemnly—

"Say, Birskett, has it occurred to you that probably we're both infected by now?"

"Sure!" said Birskett cheerfully. "Guess we're as full of bugs as a dog's full of fleas! More reason to find that cure."

The next day they told Zano they'd like to go around with their guns a bit. He was delighted, and with some half a dozen of his cronies they set out. Birskett noted that the green tent was still under the crimson Bombax.

Zano wanted to steer for the swamps. Purposely they let him for a while, but gradually veered towards the hill-side. The cliff at the back of the village seemed to have been caused by a volcanic split. Half a mile beyond was a passably easy escarpment on to what looked like a small plateau. Still higher they could see a belt of bamboo.

When Birskett suggested to Zano that there might be leopards or some interesting game that way, he swore that never was game known to be there, no, not of any sort.

"Looks bad," reported Birskett, but persisted in walking parallel. They managed to edge around until they were walking along the beginning of the steep slope. Birskett suddenly pretended to see some game moving above and calling—purposely in Luganda—to the doctor to follow, made to mount the escarpment.

Instantly Zano and the six warriors, who were all armed, leaped ahead and formed around him. Zano, his face obstinately sulky but determined, said:

"*Neda mwami*, there is no living beast there."

"*Wewao! Wewao!*" asserted Birskett, simulating excitement. "I saw him!" and feigning not to notice the lowering looks of the men, attempted to push past them. Instantly they raised their spears and Zano, clutching at his arm, cried out as if really distressed:

"*Neda! Neda! munange! Nkwegairide! Nsonyiwe!* (No, no, my dear friend, I implore you. Forgive me! There are devils there! The chief forbids you to risk your life.) *Nkwegairide, munange!*"

In spite of the polite words native fashion, there was menace in the features of all of them. Birskett reflected swiftly. Should they force their way they would have to kill, which might mean putting the whole pack of savages on their trail? On the other hand the tabu might keep them off the sacred ground.

But they had no provision; if the mountains should yield neither rabbits, foxes nor birds, they would surely be chased should they come down for food. True, Stoutt might have left canned stuff.

He turned to Kirkton close behind him.

"We can fight our way through, I guess, but—how about it, doc?"

"Hadn't we better try other means first? And besides I haven't got my instruments with us."

"That settles it!" and turning back to Zano he smiled, saying:

"*Muyombera ki, munange?* (What are we quarrelling about, my friend? I didn't understand.) *Onsekererako ki?* (Why do you laugh at me?) *Mangu wansi we!* (Come, let's go down then.)"

"Thatz fine! Goo' night! Thatz fine! Goo' mornin'!" retorted Zano, showing his teeth.

XIV

"STOUTT'S shack lies somewhere up there above our heads," affirmed Birskett, "and probably his remains are still there. Whether they know or not how he died, they've kind of deified him. That ground's tabu probably to them as well as to any stranger. Now we know what we're at, but that don't amount to much."

They were sitting in the low door of their hut trying to discover some method of circumventing the native superstition. It seemed that the usual stupidity of the human race, as is frequently the case, was to be the means of depriving them and their fellows of a remedy for a plague worse than any plague of old Egypt.

To the doctor's trained mind there was something maddeningly irritating in the fact that reasoning could not drive the truth into the heads of the natives that they were acting against their own interests. Moreover the value of time had risen, for they had both come to realize that they were doomed; if the disease overcame them before they could solve the problem, the cure would be lost for ever; even if Friedlander or any one else succeeded afterwards in discovering the shack, he wouldn't find the note-books which had been stolen by Lörtzer, and they would not have given any clue anyway.

To fight their way up with but three men to aid them seemed highly impracticable. The doctor had thought of escaping by night. As a test they had sent Zapoko out at night, but he soon reported that they were watched. Evidently courtesy and food and anything else they required that the natives possessed were theirs, except permission to enter the tabu ground.

The messenger had already been sent by the way of Mbarara, going round the south of the mountains, to Entebbe for goods, but they must reckon three months at least before the *safari* could return, and then there was a good chance that Friedlander would see to it that the goods were held up in German territory. And besides, by that time——

Already Birskett had developed the slight rash on the body which is one of the primary symptoms. However the cortex of the brain was not yet attacked, producing the soporific signs, from which the malady is named.

The knowledge didn't depress either man, inasfar as a lingering death seemed sure, but it angered both; the doctor raged at the thought of the many scientific ambitions he wished to pursue. Birskett swore at the idea of being slowly poisoned before he could carry out the job he had undertaken. He again considered fighting his way up recklessly, but in such a fight they could not win through, burdened as they would be with the heavy haversacks containing the doctor's field outfit. He threshed his mind to find a way out.

"Thank Heaven that Friedlander fellow doesn't know anything about Stoutt's shack being here," the doctor was saying.

"Probably not. Whatever that thug Lörtzer said, he would lie. He wouldn't have let it appear that he knew too much about it. Probably he denied all knowledge of the manner of Stoutt's death or the place."

"Possibly," said the doctor, "the better plan would be to continue on around to the south and endeavor to reach the shack *over* the mountains."

"Good enough, doc, but there's two things against that. We'll have to pass through German ground and I guess Friedlander would follow and have the power to hold us up somehow as he tried to in Uganda. Recollect that the German Government supports and subsidizes its men of trade and science—which is more than ours does. Also there's the question of time, and we haven't got a long suit on that!"

"True," assented Kirkton. "It's most irritating. To have a thing almost within one's grasp and to be held up by ordinary human stupidity! My God!"

"I guess that's what's the matter with what they call progress. Say, I've a hunch the best thing to do is to try to fool 'em. But first of all look over the ground. Tomorrow, we'll say we're going hunting, but *singly!* Get me? You go one way and I the other. You might with a bit of luck

spot the shack if you get on a hill or something. Lörtzer said he did."

"But what's the good of that?" complained the doctor. "How are we going to get away from these jailers?"

"M'm. Take a chance and fight, I guess and— Sacred suffering snakes!" Birskett almost shouted. "I've got it! Makes me think of the tenderloin, man!"

"Well, well, what?" demanded the doctor testily.

"Dope, man! Can't you give 'em a shot of something to put 'em to sleep with the needle?"

"M'm, yes. I have some veronal."

"That's the great idea! We'll both go along tomorrow, take all the gear and camp as near the escarpment as possible. Put 'em to bed that night and be away out of sight long before dawn. There's a good moon, too. Even if Friedlander comes nosing around he won't think of watching us all night."

"Thanks, Birskett," said Kirkton gravely. "I believe you've solved the problem."

"Lord, man, that's my end of the job, isn't it? What a pity we haven't a drink to celebrate! Hullo, here's Stoutt's man. He's a good boy according to his lights and I guess I'd rather dope him than shoot him."

That night they felt and slept better with the dawn of hope, but in the morning Birskett awoke with a splitting headache and a high fever. He crawled off his native pallet of grass, but when he stood up he swayed and nearly fell.

"What's wrong?" demanded Kirkton, who couldn't see distinctly what had happened in the gloom of the hut.

"Nothing," asserted Birskett, sitting suddenly on his haunches, holding his dry burning head.

He essayed again to carry on, but his legs refused duty. This time the doctor saw and came over.

"H'm, temperature," said he, with his hand upon Birskett's wrist. "Lie down and I'll get the thermometer."

"Oh, it's nothing, doc. Just——"

"Do as I tell you!"

Birskett obeyed reluctantly and slightly incoherently. But he lay quiet with the thermometer in his mouth.

"What is it, doc?" he asked, as the doctor went to the door to read the instrument.

"Malaria. I'll give you a shot of quinin and Warburg's and phenacetin. No, no, nothing to do with the other thing," he insisted mendaciously as Birskett's eyes questioned mutely. "*That* doesn't give a high temperature. Hundred and two point two. Nothing. Sweat it out of you and you'll be all right in a day or two."

Birskett swore feelingly and at length. But he was too light-headed to think clearly. He raved slightly and when he had swallowed the medicine and had had a dose of quinin he dropped off to sleep. It was dark when he awoke. But he sensed immediately that he was better; he had been sweating profusely and his skin felt moist and cool. He could hear his companion's regular breathing and in the stillness the cry of a night owl.

"Gosh, I'll be all right in the morning," he thought, and after tossing about for a bit fell asleep again. The doctor was squatting by him in the morning taking the thermometer from his arm pit.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Hundred point one. Doing fine, Birskett. Feel weak?"

"Yep, a bit, but I'll be all right by tomorrow."

He drank some broth Kubi had made from goat stew and lay quiet for a while. Outside in the bright twilight before the sun rose he could hear the regular nervous tread of the doctor pacing up and down. He was irritated and annoyed by Birskett's inopportune illness although he would never have admitted it—probably not even to himself. But Birskett could understand perfectly; he, too, was none the less exasperated that he should be struck down just at this moment when time was so precious.

Sleeping sickness varies considerably in the time taken to develop; with some cases, days or weeks; others, months. Cases had been known to break out after years. Possibly it depended upon how the victim had been inoculated—whether in the flesh, a vein or an artery. The dread disease had marked him already and it wasn't reasonable to suppose, or to act upon the assumption, that the doctor had escaped, considering the number of times both had been bitten. Presently he said:

"Say, doc, holding things up like this worries me a whole heap. Now don't get up in the air, but listen to me. Pack up the things, take Zapoko and Matana and with Zano get along as we arranged. Strike a

good place and camp. I'll be O. K. by tomorrow and I'll come along on easy marches to join you. By doing that you'll put 'em off any suspicion at all. No!" as the doctor began to protest. "I'll go plumb crazy lying here and watching you. Leave me a stock of quinin and I'll be all right. And, doc, if anything should go wrong, you put 'em to sleep as we worked it out and get up above."

"But if I do that," objected Kirkton, "they might take it out of you."

"Oh, they won't—and what does it matter if they do! Anyway, don't get cantankerous, doc, there's only one object to the trip ain't there?"

"Yes, but—but there's no need for me to go on ahead. I'll wait a few days."

"No, you *won't!*" Birskett sat up excitedly. "See here, doc, I'm set on it, and you just can't upset a sick man now! No, joking aside, it's a good stunt for you to go ahead alone. Put any idea of trying to double-cross 'em out of their heads and Friedlander's, too."

They went on arguing about it for a while, but finally, being of the opinion that Birskett was in no danger from malaria, the doctor consented to start out the following day.

BIRSKETT sought to make matters comprehensible to the native mind by a long conversation with Zano in which he impressed upon him the fact that the doctor was bored—or, as the natives say, an ant was eating his soul—and wished to be amused, so that he would go hunting alone.

After discussing final arrangements, the doctor departed with Matana and Zapoko and all the gear except enough medicine for Birskett.

Sadness settled upon him like the clouds in the peaks, and a queer feeling, probably produced, he thought, by the reaction of the fever, that he would never see the doctor again. Yet he was glad, for at any rate something was doing. The doctor by now knew enough Luganda to make himself understood and understand. And as long as the boys were with him they had enough bush lore to keep the party fed more or less.

In the late afternoon, after squatting in the shade in the rear of the hut, he took a walk to try his strength and also to see whether the green tent was still under the scarlet Bombax. It was; a fact which relieved his anxiety somewhat.

Although he had spent most of his life by solitary camp fires and trailed many thousands of miles on lonely trails, he never recollected feeling as lonesome as he did that first night after the doctor's departure. He felt indeed as if he were being abandoned to die and foolishly put his hand apprehensively to his jaw. Yes, the glands were already beginning to swell.

"Sudden death in the heat of a fight, yes," he reflected "but sitting down watching yourself go to sleep for keeps— Ugh!"

However there was a little consolation in the fact that the victim of trypanosomiasis, after the microbe has eaten well into the cortex of the brain, doesn't give a —— what happens as long as he can be left alone to sleep. However, he hadn't got as far as that yet!

He called in Kubi—who, poor ——, had just as surely the same fate awaiting him, of which happily he was unconscious—to keep him company by the smoldering fire in the gloomy hut.

He held Kubi talking quite a while. He feared to be left. Fear, in the sense of fear not momentary but prolonged and swelling every moment, was a new experience for him; all the more terrible because in all his life, save for mere touches of malaria and such like sickness, he had never been ill; a touch of cold in an inclement climate would make him rave and curse with impatience.

This fear was like the constricting folds of a python about him; crushing, cold, and remorseless; a something against which he could not use his strength of mind or body.

He thought of Stoutt who knowingly had inoculated himself, and sought to excuse his own terrors by arguing that at any rate Stoutt had been morally certain he had found the cure. Yet the deed was none the less. And there was the cure right close to him! He wanted to rush out and tear his way by main force up the hill. Absurd! The hope of any of them lay in the hands of that queer man with a fixed idea and no sense of humor, whose bright bird eyes seemed always to burn with zeal.

Birskett writhed under the whiplash of self-reproach. Many a poor —— doomed by tuberculosis or cancer or other incurable disease, who has grimly fought a losing battle for years, would have laughed at the

agony of that big, strong man that sweaty night in the first grip of fear. But he was unaccustomed to such an emotion; habit, after all, is four-fifths of life.

Worn out with fever and his emotional calisthenics he sank asleep near dawn. When he awakened the rays of the sun were already high overhead. He felt pretty fit and taking his temperature found it ninety-nine—very nearly normal.

He decided to strike the trail that afternoon. Anyway he would be doing something. Some eggs and a little of the everlasting goat made him still more optimistic. He told Kubi to make ready for the trail and suddenly thinking of Friedlander, walked through the village to see whether he was still there.

Just as he thought, the fellow had gone, following the doctor no doubt. He stood talking to one of the natives by the gate of the village. A long quavering cry interrupted them.

"*Bulamatadi!*" repeated the man and ran echoing the cry towards the club house.

Away down the valley to the southeast Birskett made out first the glint of bayonets in the afternoon sun and then a regular column of disciplined troops marching.

"Belgians!" he exclaimed and stared. "Thank God! This may save the whole outfit!"

XV

DOCTOR KIRKTON was also haunted by the specter of fear. He too had developed the primary symptoms of the rash, but he had not told Birskett. Although more callous and less imaginative than Birskett, he had observed more. Several times lately Birskett had expressed momentarily slight peevishness, and more significant still, had in conversation had lapses—quite unconsciously—of several seconds; a sudden break in the middle of a sentence.

This, too, the doctor had noticed in himself. This was the fear that drove him into a frenzy. Once the terrible lethargy got a firm hold, he would never have the continuous and requisite energy to struggle forward, and even if there, to persevere with his research. Soon would come the growing emaciation, the decay of the vital will to do, ending in the creeping coma and indifference to all things.

The inopportune sickness of Birskett drove him into an ecstasy of terror; it seemed the last cruel straw that was to break them. Now he regretted that he had not taken the precaution to have his precious instruments and cases with him when on the scouting trip and then to have fought their way up to the upper slopes.

He could no more judge of how long it would take him to reach the shack—thanks to Birskett's resource—than how long before the *trypanosoma gambiense* reached the cortex of his brain and the mental motor started to slow down. Thus, to Birskett's suggestion to go on he made little resistance; indeed, had he remained seriously sick, the doctor would have considered it his duty to abandon him and risk all on the hazard.

That morning, as he started off, accompanied by Zapoko, Matana and Zano and the six warriors forming what really was a guard, carrying everything that they had managed to save of his precious instruments and medicinal supplies, he was conscious of a great relief.

To the south of the village the escarpment continued almost unscalable for some three miles, but farther on the ground began to break up into rough and broken foot-hills again. Villages became plentiful showing that the country was evidently thickly populated. From the fact that the village of the chief was that of Zano, who had evidently been Stoutt's guide, he concluded that Stoutt must have passed through that village on his way up and down from the swamps to his snow-clad laboratory; hence that the route up the escarpment must be in the vicinity.

Consumed by desperate energy Kirkton found it hard to restrain the desire to rush ahead, action always tending to alleviate anxiety. But reflection reminded him that the better way would be to select a camp near some hillock or hill away from the line of the escarpment.

That day they made a short journey. Among the foot-hills they came upon a large village from whence he understood Zano to say they would be within reach of good shooting towards the swamps below.

That afternoon, partially to keep himself from brooding and growing too morbid over watching his own state, he overhauled the whole of his gear, checking in his notebook the instruments and exact quantities of drugs. To his dismay he discovered that yet another delicate phial, kept in cotton

wool, had been, as many another, smashed by the jolting. It was the last of the trypsin, an absolutely necessary drug, without which he could not carry out certain reactions.

He didn't swear—not even irritably. The case was far too serious for words. He sat there in the shade of the hut, his still bright, bird-like eyes set upon the mist-swept heights of the mountains as if probing to find out whether—and there was just a possibility—he might find another supply in Stoutt's shack. That indeed seemed the only chance of avoiding complete failure; for he knew that neither he nor Birskett, should they not discover the cure, would ever live long enough, or retain their faculties, to reach an outpost of civilization with the material to send on to New York for analysis. Well, there was only one thing that could be done and that was to go on.

Next morning, gloomily despondent, he allowed Zano and his people to lead him out with a bunch of local hunters on an alleged hunt, but no sooner had they cleared the bush around them and were approaching the end of the clutter of foot-hills than he instructed Matana, who best understood his limping Luganda, to tell them that he was sick and would rest.

They stopped in a grove of wild bananas, and beneath a great tree with curious horizontal branches laden with globular scarlet flowers, he lay and brooded, fighting the impatience which bade him rush for the heights at any cost without even waiting for Birskett. Later, under the pretext of searching for game, he mounted the highest and most westward foot-hill and examined the mountain slope with his glasses, in the rays of the western sun.

They were now about 5,000 feet above sea level. Almost at the top of the escarpment, apparently two thousand feet, began the belt of bamboos which seemed to continue for about another three thousand feet. Beyond that he could make out ragged rocks and cliffs covered with some kind of green, probably lichen.

Above, still higher, appeared to be a plateau and in a ravine to the left, through the swirls of mist he could distinguish the glimmer of the edge of a glacier and scattered patches of snow.

Shifting the glasses about to the north, the direction from which he had come, he caught a glimpse of a safari quite close now to the village. For a moment he thought that Birskett must have started a few hours afterwards, but the number of porters and the general size precluded that possibility. He asked Zano's opinion. After some chatter among them he understood that they were sure it was the other white man. He-of-the-Crocodile-Eyes, as they called him.

"Confound his impertinence, camping on my trail," began the doctor vexedly and then stopped, bringing down the glasses with a jerk. "Yes," he asserted solemnly, "the Lord has delivered the enemy into my hands."

HE HURRIEDLY returned to the village and instructed Matana to make Zano take them immediately into the fringe of the foot-hills, which would make a good hunting camp. Although it was doubtful whether he understood exactly what was wanted, Matana harangued the equally puzzled Zano into obeying the white man's orders.

The next morning he left the rough grass shelter which the natives had made for him and mounted the nearest hill. His glasses revealed what he had expected—Friedlander's safari camped upon his trail about a mile away.

He returned to camp, told them that he was still unwell and prepared to pass the day as best he could. When the afternoon shadows were well upon their daily crawl up the mountain slopes, he ascended the hill again and satisfied himself that Friedlander was still there. So intent was he upon his own plan that it scarcely occurred to him to wonder what was Friedlander's game.

With some difficulty he made Zano understand that he had seen Birskett arriving at the village and wished some of the men to return instantly to him with a message. The men demurred, for they could scarcely reach there by sunset; but as the white seemed so anxious, Zano insisted. The following brief message he scribbled on a page torn from his notebook:

Imperative reasons force my attempt to-night. If successful will wait you four days on top of escarpment; will leave grass trail. Friedlander here. Before starting take double injection.

"That'll buck him up a little for the effort," he muttered.

He waited, impatiently watching the time. When his watch read five-twenty, for the sun sets at six on the equator, he gave himself a shot with the needle and slipped his revolver beneath his ragged shirt. Taking Matana and Zano he then set out directly for Friedlander's camp. That worthy he found as before comfortably seated beneath his tent fly. At the doctor's appearance he seemed slightly astonished. Matana and Zano waited aside and began talking to some of Friedlander's men. Kirkton advanced with nervous swift steps.

"Good evening, Dr. Kirkton," began Friedlander suavely "I hope——"

"Good evening, Dr. Friedlander," responded Kirkton sharply.

Friedlander's slit eyes narrowed slightly, but he said with perfect equanimity:

"I do not understand you, doctor? You have made a mistake, is it not?"

"I'm not accustomed to making mistakes. You're Dr. Adolph Friedlander of Hamburg and you traveled on the same boat from Port Said. Your purpose here is as obvious as your object in denying your identity. But I haven't come here to argue with you."

Kirkton shifted slightly, so that his back was to the natives.

"You see this revolver? Don't move! You will supply me with two phials of trypsin, the use of which you perfectly understand. Don't argue. I have already the advanced stages of trypanosomiasis, so you will understand that my time is limited. If you attempt to call for help your death is certain; moreover you have only your own men, for these natives will not attack me without the chief's order. Now quick, get that trypsin from the same case as the one in which you keep the pure alcohol!"

The narrowed slit eyes looked into the hard and very bright bird-like ones. What he saw there seemed to convince him. He moved with some attempt at dignity. Kirkton followed him to the tent door. Covered by the revolver Friedlander handed over the required phials which Kirkton carefully placed in his breast pocket.

"It is a pity, Dr. Kirkton," said Friedlander sneeringly, "that you should have thought it so necessary to threaten me, is it not? I should have been but too much delighted to help a colleague. However, you shall pay for this, yes. You can not escape me. If that is necessary, I shall reckon with you myself."

"Fine!" said Kirkton, as pleased as a child now that he had gotten his precious drug. "Take my compliments and go to the ——! If you attempt to go for your guns before I'm outside your camp, I shall fire. Matana! Zano!"

Holding him covered, and openly, he backed away until a phenix palm gave shelter, followed by the eyes of the wondering natives. As he disappeared into the grove he heard the angry shouts of Friedlander.

"Nothing doing," he thought flippantly as they hurried back. "You won't get a single man to attempt an attack before morning—even if you can buy 'em."

The sun was setting fire to the Congo hills when he reached his primitive camp. Here a surprize awaited him. Birskett's personal boy, Kubi, bearing a note, scribbled in pencil in scarcely legible characters:

Get out instantly at any cost. Mountains. Can not follow. Don't waste a minute or expedition lost. Take Kubi.

BIRSKETT.

XVI

AS BIRSKETT returned toward his hut he heard a great hullaballoo in progress in the village. The men, in answer to a summons, were all hurrying to the club house for a *shauri*. Although this territory was part of the Congo Free State, he was sure that never before had any officials visited there.

From his own knowledge of their régime in other parts he well knew that that would be a sad day in the annals of the tribe. For the future they would have to go out into the swamps and forest in order to help provide a sufficient income to support the royal dignity of the King of the Belgians and a few thousand other complacent whites, his concessionaires. From the excitement the very name produced he knew, too, that their reputation had preceded them.

However, his sympathy for them was at this moment overshadowed by the fate of the expedition and the hundreds of thousands—probably of these very whites now approaching—which depended on the successful results of Kirkton's researches.

To his surprize, as he sat in the shade of his hut, as evidence of the extreme perturbation of the native mind, came Yarazoo, the ancient witch-doctor, in his dirty mauve pants and strange head-dress of dried purple and vermilion fungus.

After the usual polite greetings and meanderings he approached the object of his visit, which was to ask the white man's advice in their attitude to the approaching askaris of whom, said Yarazoo, they had heard.

Was it true, he plaintively inquired, as was said by the report brought by several of their young men who had journeyed hunting into the far west, that the Bulamatadi ate up all the natives with whom they came in contact? Was there no medicine that he, Birskett, could suggest, or make, which would secure them the friendship of these strange whites? Were they brothers of the same tribe?

Although he knew that in substance the most awful rumors that their young men could have reported were in the main true, yet naturally he had a repugnance to confirm them to a native. As he hesitated, the mention of medicine gave him an idea.

Could he not make a bargain with the old man that should he protect, or pretend to protect them, from any unjust demands the new whites might make, that he should reveal to him the secret of the medicine of the Giver of Life?

The prospect of gaining, before it was too late, that which they sought, excited him. That he could in practise do nothing to protect them against whatever the Belgian commandant might choose to do, or inflict, was almost forgotten. Such a promise, even if he could not carry it out, would not do them any harm; and the results of the recovery of the secret cure to humanity at large certainly seemed to justify the deception.

The Bulamatadi, he told the old man, were a people greedy for wealth; for an extract gathered from the trees of the forest, rubber, and of which they then knew nothing, and for ivory. They should, he counseled them, listen to the words of the white chief and endeavor to placate him, for who could argue with unlimited guns that spat death?

Yarazoo acknowledged the wisdom of this advice and evidently fearful for his own prestige, asked for a recipe against the lethal nature of bullets. The repetition of the word for magical medicine decided Birskett.

"Listen, O Yarazoo," said he, "what thinkest thou would have been the words of the Giver of Life?"

"*Simanya, munange,*" responded the old man. "Of these people he never spake."

"Thou believest that indeed we are his brothers (of the same tribe)?"

"Truly. Hath not Zano, he who was always with him, said so even from the first?"

"That is so. Listen and stretch thine ears, O Yarazoo. Thou wouldst have my word in counsel joined to thine? Thou wouldst have my words in the ears of the Bulamatadi. Is it not so?"

"Truly, my friend."

"Then, O Yarazoo, shalt thou make known to me that magical medicine which the Giver of Life gave unto thee against the sleeping death?"

Every wrinkle in the withered face seemed to become petrified. Birskett repeated the question.

"I do not know," came the stereotyped formula.

As once again the mulish obstinacy was thrust upon him, knowing all that it might cost, a sudden passion to strike the old man obsessed Birskett. He realized again that wild devils with red hot pincers would not overcome this inherent terror of the tabu.

They sat staring into each other's eyes, the white and the brown man, and over the white came a feeling of weariness. What did it matter? Why bother to save idiots from their own stupidity? It had always been like that through the ages, you still had forcibly to smash the bottle of a rum hound or the pipe of a dope fiend to prevent him poisoning himself and his family.

"The words of the white men then," he heard Yarazoo saying tonelessly, "are turned against us, his friends?"

"Nay, nay, I will help you with that which I may," he returned half-heartedly. "But the Bulamatadi have many guns."

They, as white men had, at first sight, appeared as saviors; now the suggestion of their attitude to natives gave him pause; perhaps they would prove merely another gang of Lörtzers and Friedlanders. The interview ended, he stretched out in the door of his hut feeling more tired and dispirited than ever he had done. He had as yet no suspicion of the reason.

Later the harsh blaring of a trumpet startled him awake.

"Oh, yes, those darned Bulamatadi," he thought, and got up feeling somewhat more energetic. He would go down and look them over.

Taking Kubi with him, he went out of the village. He found the Belgians on the site of Friedlander's old camp, with the askaris making grass shelters in a circle about them like a laager. The village was very quiet he remarked, save for the continuous murmur of low discussion from the club house.

AS HE approached he saw three whites in white uniforms and gold lace seated in chairs beneath the scarlet branches of the Bombax, while their two tents were being pitched. He estimated roughly that the number of troops was at least two hundred and that there were almost as many porters.

"Poor brutes!" he muttered, thinking of Boko and his people.

The nearest Belgian station, he reckoned, must be Matanda on the other side of the Semliki among the Congo hills, about a hundred or more miles away.

"I wonder what the darned devils are after," he mused, for as most who knew the early days of the Congo Free State concessionaires he had no love for their officials, when every man was out to clear up a fortune in the shortest time possible as well as serve his royal employer.

As he approached the group he noticed that they did not seem astonished to find a white there.

"Probably heard of Stoutt or Lörtzer from native rumor," he decided, "and come along to pike their dirty noses."

One man, from having more gold lace than the others, he took correctly to be the *chef du poste*, a large-faced man with a blond beard and truculent mustaches. A younger man, who looked like an Italian, had a small military black mustache and goatee. In the center sat the third; quite a different type even at that distance; a small man with a weasel face and similar bright small eyes.

"Mean little runt," Birskett summed him up. "Lucky I can talk the lingo."

They did not rise, but seemed to stare disdainfully at the figure of the big white man with a ragged blond beard and haggard eyes, in his torn and filthy clothes.

"*Bon jour, messieurs!*" he greeted them amiably enough.

"*Bon jour, m'sieu'!*" returned the Scandinavian *chef du poste*. "Are you Dr. Kirkton?"

"*Non, m'sieu'*, I hav'n't the honor."

He was aware of a servant with a chair and the weasel-faced man bidding him to be seated. As he accepted, the Italian whispered something in the ear of the middle man who nodded.

"*M'sieu' le capitain Strindhorst, m'sieu' le médecin major Verhaeren,*" and touching his scanty gold lace, "*le lieutenant Villino.*"

At the mention of "*médecin major*" Birskett eyed the weasel-faced one. The first statement, taking him for Kirkton, coupled with his presence, seemed to Birskett suspicious; doctors were usually occupied in big stations.

At that moment came another of those lapses when the spark missed. Then he understood that the commandant was inquiring his name. For a few seconds he had difficulty in collecting his wits even sufficiently to summon such a familiar word as his own name. The *chef du poste* noticed the hesitation and querulously repeated the demand. Birskett complied and the mental machinery picked up again.

"I'd better keep mum about the doc," he reflected dubiously, "and see what their game is."

What was he doing there? Hunting and exploring, he replied and added that he had lost his safari at the hands of the cannibals. The lieutenant asked some details, but the *capitain* didn't seem at all interested as to what had been done to him. In a pause the *médecin major* butted in with—

"But *m'sieu'* knows *le Docteur Keerkton?*"

"I have seen him," said Birskett guardedly, and to distract their attention, added, "there is also another white doctor here."

"*Tiens!*" That news seemed to startle the *médecin major* and he exchanged a rapid glance with the *chef du poste*.

"What does he seek here?"

"He is searching for a cure for trypanosomiasis, I believe," said Birskett, watching his man keenly. The bright, small eyes quivered for a second.

"That's got you, my friend," he mused pessimistically. "Another Friedlander bunch or I'm a Hottentot. You'll bear watching."

"You have not heard of him as of Dr. Kirkton?" he added.

"No, no," returned Verhaeren, but he was evidently thinking hard.

"You have heard the rumor of Dr. Kirkton's presence from the natives, no doubt?"

"*Si, si,*" answered Verhaeren, "at Matanda."

"*Ah, c'est vrai? Tiens*, and the natives speak of him as *le Docteur Kirkton, n'est-ce pas?*"

Verhaeren saw that he had made a mistake, but he pretended not to have heard and, calling a servant, ordered refreshment. Birskett did not press the question. There were cigarets on the table. After they had drunk of gin—not trade gin though—the two officers, as if by arrangement, made their excuses and departed. Verhaeren seemed very excited.

"Where are the two doctors?"

"*Sais pas,*" retorted Birskett carelessly. "They went off chasing bugs, I believe."

"You are not interested in the study of the terrible malady?"

"Naturally, *m'sieu'*. May not we all get it here?"

"You do not fear to get it?"

Birskett shrugged his big shoulders.

"*M'sieu'* is a brave man. Have you noticed many cases among the natives here?"

"Nothing at all, *m'sieu'!*"

Verhaeren continued a kind of catechism about the district and the natives and Birskett fended the questions off as best he could to the advantage of the native.

"Have you heard from them of another white doctor who died here about twelve months ago—an American doctor?"

"*Oui, m'sieu',*" answered Birskett slowly. "Dr. Stoutt. You have heard of him, no doubt."

Verhaeren "had read" about him; then at a tangent he demanded whether Birskett knew whether either of the two doctors had yet found the cure.

"I am not in the confidence of the doctors," evaded Birskett.

"That is a pity. I have come to see this Dr. Keerkton, and for this other *médecin*, whom I do not know—*m'sieu'* speaks the native language of course?— Has it ever happened that he has heard them speaking of instruments, papers, that Dr. Stoott left when he died?"

"*Non, m'sieu'*, never. Did you know that Dr. Stoutt had found a cure before he died?"

The question shrewdly got him. The weasel eyes glittered.

"Yes, but yes, I had heard of that."

"Possibly the natives spoke about it?" inquired Birskett sarcastically.

Verhaeren laughed sharply, pretending to think it a great joke.

"There is a possibility that this Dr. Kirkton has found these papers which would reveal the formula, you know, which is of course the property of the Congo Free State."

"Oh, is it?"

"Was it not found in our territory, but yes? Without a permit no scientist, hunter, or trader is allowed to exploit our territory. Certainly not. If he has found these papers or not he must be answerable to the administration."

"At Boma is it not?"

"*Parfaitement, m'sieu'.*"

"A very long voyage and dangerous—to prisoners?"

Verhaeren cackled and shrugged.

"Dr. Kirkton no doubt will be anxious to make amicable arrangements with me—that is with his Majesty King Leopold."

"He sure will," muttered Birskett.

"*Pardon, m'sieu'?*"

"I said that he will be delighted to do so!"

"And the other white doctor?"

"He also, naturally."

"But if the doctors resist?"

"And you are going to send a force to bring the two doctors here?"

"Certainly. They can not escape."

He gestured elegantly to the askaris.

"Perhaps it might save you annoyance should I persuade Dr. Kirkton to come here? I'm sure he would be delighted to see you personally?"

"*M'sieu'* will be very obliging and I assure him that perhaps we may arrange to overlook his personal trespass on the domains of His Majesty."

"Sure, any little thing like that just suits me fine," muttered Birskett, stifling a longing to use his hands.

He rose.

"If *m'sieu'* will forgive me for some half an hour I will try to arrange for Dr. Kirkton to present himself to you."

"And the other, *m'sieu'?*"

"I can not answer for him."

"You will dine with me, *m'sieu'*, I entreat you?"

"I guess I sure will whether I like it or not," murmured Birskett and added, "*Pardon, m'sieu'*, I shall be enchanted."

IN THE hut he scribbled the note to Kirkton and despatched Kubi with instructions to make his getaway as quietly as possible. Conscious of an ebb in his energy he took an antimony-arsenical injection and sat down to think things out.

For himself—well, what did it matter anyway? Yet he considered whether he should try to stop where he was, if they would let him, and at night make a break after the doctor? No, the main and only point was to give the doctor time to get away to the mountain; the longer he could bluff the Belgians the better.

While packing up his haversack with the medicinal supply the doctor had left him, he stumbled on a dirty card of the doctor's, which had evidently been discarded or fallen out of his case. He grinned and shoved it in his tunic pocket.

On his way down he heard more commotion going on in the village and one of Boko's sons overtook him crying that the Bulamatadi had sent an escort of askaris to bring the chief before them, an unprecedented act in their minds; for always must a stranger present himself to the chief. What would their friend advise them to do? Birskett urged them to submit as they knew the Bulamatadi were powerful.

He found the *médecin major* and the two officers in their chairs imbibing more drinks. He bowed before Dr. Verhaeren, saying ironically—

"I am enchanted to meet my distinguished colleague!"

"*Quoi!*" gasped Verhaeren. "*Le Docteur Keerklon?*"

"At your service!" said Birskett coldly and thrust the doctor's soiled card at him.

XVII

THE Belgian glanced at the card and then gazed up at the tall American. The *chef du poste* was staring also bewilderedly. Birskett smiled mockingly.

"But I do not understand, *m'sieu'*," said Verhaeren. "You have said that you were a *m'sieu'* Birskett, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Naturally, *m'sieu'!* In some situations it is necessary to be circumspect if not diplomatic, *n'est-ce pas?*"

Verhaeren glanced again at the card and seemed a bit unconvinced. The *chef du poste* broke in:

"*Si, si, mon vieux!* Don't you recall how the fellow hesitated when he gave his name? He is undoubtedly the man we want."

"*Alors, messieurs*, I am at your disposition," said Birskett.

He seated himself nonchalantly and took a cigaret.

Verhaeren still seemed nonplused; he paused as if trying to recollect exactly what he had already said. Then he glanced at the Scandinavian, who nodded and departed as before.

"You will drink, *m'sieu'?*"

"Don't mind if I do. I guess I need it," responded Birskett. He helped himself and grinned. "Well, *m'sieu'*, how about it?"

"*Pardon, m'sieu' le docteur*, I do not understand English very well?"

"You stated to me before that you wished to make a proposition to me regarding the—um—the exploitation of Congo Free State territory, which by the way I can not acknowledge."

"Can not acknowledge, *m'sieu'*. Why not?"

"Because the boundary has not yet been settled."

"*Zut!* What is that? Perhaps there will be no necessity to dispute so small a thing, Dr. Keerkton. Why should there between colleagues, if you permit me to say so, for you are a *savant* and I but a poor —— of a *médecin major*. *Que voulez vous!* I have every respect for your *savants* of the great *Etats Unis d'Amérique*. Of *le pauvre Docteur Stoott*—ah, so sad! You have heard no news of him, *docteur?*"

"D'you think I'm a spiritist?" demanded Birskett sweetly, thinking 'now comes the sob-stuff.'

"Ah yes, you have reason, *docteur*. But as you met Dr. Lörtzer in New York I thought perhaps that he would have been able to indicate to you the place of Dr. Stoott's—um—death. That would be the place to look for the effects he left, *n'est-ce pas?* The natives would not destroy them I should imagine."

"Who told you that I knew Dr. Lörtzer?" demanded Birskett.

Verhaeren shrugged and laughed.

"Have I not read in the papers?"

"—— all journalists," muttered Birskett. "Well, he was too ill to recall things like that," he added in French.

Verhaeren watched him calculatingly.

"You will recall, *m'sieu'*, what I said this afternoon? That it was reported that Dr. Stoott had discovered the cure, was it not? I wondered perhaps that you might have recovered his invaluable books or heard from the natives of their whereabouts?"

"And if I have?"

"Ah!" The weasel eyes registered the swallowing of the bait. "Then you *have, m'sieu'? Sapristi!*"

"Naturally whether I have or no is a professional secret. You will, *m'sieu' le médecin major*, easily understand."

"Ah yes, of course, there is the enormous reward for the cure of trypanosomiasis, *m'sieu'* would remind me? But in that case we could of course come to terms, *mais, oui!*"

"*Mais, oui*, my hat!" exclaimed Birskett.

"*Ecoutez, m'sieu'*," he went on a little more calmly, "has it ever occurred to you that if Dr. Stoutt has found a cure that that discovery belongs to him?"

"*Oh! Zut! Que voulez vous?*"

Verhaeren seemed so tickled at the idea that the secret had been found and was presumably within his grasp that his beady eyes glittered. From what had been said in the morning this American was no fool; he knew well enough what an arrest and despatch to Boma, more than a thousand miles through the Congo, could be made to entail.

"Also, *m'sieu' le médecin major*, has it occurred to you that his wife and children are entitled to the financial benefits of his work—not to mention such a small thing as the honor to his country?"

"Ah, but that is a small thing, *m'sieu'*. What matter what country shall have the honor as long as humanity benefits?"

"Well, I guess that there's one rank bit of humanity that's not going to benefit—anyway not in either of those two lines."

"*Pardon, m'sieu'*, I do not understand you?"

"Sure you don't, and you never will. *Enfin, m'sieu'*, I am unable to disclose a professional secret."

"Ah, but you *have* it?"

"Again I am unable to reply. I am sure," he added sarcastically, "that you will respect my motive."

"Motive!" suddenly exploded Verhaeren, as the truth that he was being mocked dawned upon him. "The money is the motive! *Ah oui!* But have you counted how much it may cost you, *m'sieu'?* You are trespassing on the territory of the Congo Free State."

"That I can not admit, *m'sieu'*."

"I shall have no recourse but to hand you over to the military authorities! You will reflect?"

"Oh darn you, go to it!" said Birskett, the effect of the injection beginning to diminish.

The *médecin major* was gazing at him fixedly.

"*M'sieu'* is ill?" he said.

"Sure. I have the sickness!"

"*M'sieu'* has the trypanosomiasis! *Tounerre!*"

"Don't you worry. You probably have it too."

"*Moi! Mais, non, m'sieu'*, I have been extremely careful."

"Yes, you would be," assented Birskett.

"But, *m'sieu'*; if that is so you will not let the secret die with you? That is a crime! *Nom de* ——! All the world would reproach you."

"*M'sieu'*, I ask you, would I die from the trypanosomiasis when I have the cure?" asked Birskett with a tired smile.

"*Nom du* ——! *M'sieu'* mocks me!" cried the weasel face with an ill-concealed note of relief in his voice.

"But has *m'sieu'* forgotten the military authorities?" queried Birskett.

"I venture to think," decided Verhaeren, "that *m'sieu'* should consider what I have said. I do not wish to inflict unnecessary suffering. Perhaps *m'sieu'* will be good enough to remain in my tent to reflect in tranquillity. Cigarets are at his disposal."

"Enchanted!" returned Birskett flippantly, and striding within was more than glad to stretch out upon the Belgian's camp bed, for he was suffering from a severe head-ache and pains in the back and loins and a high temperature, of which now he knew well the meaning.

The feeling of lassitude was even more appreciable mentally than physically; he missed his old cheery laugh and was conscious of frowning frequently in the effort

to follow a consecutive thought. The glands beneath his jaw were more swollen.

Through the glare of the tent door he could see the porters still busy building the askaris' shelters in regular company streets. Probably half or more of them, he reflected, were already inoculated.

He began to worry about the doctor and whether Kubi would reach him that evening in time to let him get away that night; for he feared that the Belgians would in any case have despatched a squad to hunt up Friedlander. Why hadn't he put them on the wrong trail by saying that the doctor had gone to the north instead of casually remarking that the two doctors had gone bug hunting? They would get the direction from the natives. Too late now!

Again came dismally the fear that the doctor would collapse, as he himself seemed to be doing so rapidly, before he had time to find the shack and do any work. There were a hundred possibilities that might hinder him. Even if enough of the body of Stoutt had been preserved by the cold climate, wild animals or carrion might have devoured everything except the bones. But Lörtzer had said something. What was it? Oh, about a glacier. Glacier? what glacier? Oh, yes, he had buried the bodies, Stoutt's body, in a glacier. But what did he want to do that for? Preserve them? —— No, that couldn't be— Funny— Why should Lörtzer——

These disjointed reflections, so unlike his normal lucid self slowed down in jerks into an uneasy slumber.

When he partially awoke he was conscious of a thermometer being taken from his armpit and that he had been stripped of his ragged clothes. Two figures were standing over him.

"But, *mon vieux*, you are sure," the *chef du poste* was saying, "that he has not the sickness?"

"Impossible," responded Verhaeren. "He has the cure, I tell you. How then could he have the sickness. It is but malaria!"

"It is for you to say. But look you he doesn't die under your hands and then where is the secret?"

"No, no, leave him to me. I will give him quinin."

"Do your best, otherwise he won't stand his toes being cooked. What do we gain by sending him to die on the road to Boma. *Peste!* Be careful!"

"He shall stop in my own bed. I will care for him like my own child, *mais, oui!*"

"Tough guys!" murmured Birskett, whose very lethargy had kept his eyes closed. "Well, I'll have a good sleep on a real bed before I die anyway!"

A LANTERN was burning when next he came to. This time he was really awake. Verhaeren was sitting in a chair near him. He smiled cunningly and laid a hand on the patient's forehead, remarking that his temperature had gone down.

"Sharp attack of malaria," he said. "*M'sieu'* shall have a little soup, yes?"

He called to a boy who brought in a large bowl. Birskett sat up quite perkily.

"Ah, that is well!" said the *médecin major* with genuine relief. "The strength returns, yes?"

"Yes," assented Birskett with a grim smile and added as he tasted the broth:

"But oh, boy, real chicken soup! Guess I'm in heaven before my time!"

He asked for some more and had it; also some biscuits and canned butter. Verhaeren watched him with complacent satisfaction.

"Doing mighty well, ain't I?" demanded Birskett in an erratic fit of anger. "Like to look at my toes, you ——! I'd just love to split your face while I've got a bit of he-man left in me. Still got to remember the doc, bless him!"

He passed his hands over his eyes and frowned.

Verhaeren was regarding him with the air of his profession in the presence of delirium. Birskett saw it and grinned.

"Some doctor you are! Mighty lucky you don't understand; eh? *Ca va bien?*" (How goes it?) he inquired flippantly. "How about a cigaret and a drink?"

Those last two names the Belgian understood, smiled and proffered them. The sudden spurt of the racing motor slowed to nearly normal, and recollecting his part Birskett pretended that he was exhausted and wanted to sleep, although the necessity of pretense was not very great.

The blare of a trumpet awoke him. For several moments he stared uncomprehendingly at the green roof of the tent through the mosquito net, unable to realize where he was. Then he grinned with sheer physical satisfaction; for after those weeks

of native and simian life, to awake in such luxurious surroundings was indeed a sweet experience. Verhaeren was stretched asleep in two camp chairs.

"Shame to deprive the little runt," he reflected.

He felt better, at any rate in mind; although from the touch of his hot dry skin he still had a temperature. He wondered whether Kubi had reached the doctor the previous night, and whether they had been able to make a get-away according to the plan by the aid of the needle.

However that he could not know or hope to find out—yet anyway. Also whether they had actually sent askaris after him or Friedlander, and what Friedlander was up to.

Summing everything up, he decided that his best plan was to play for time; the longer he could kid along this *médecin major* the better chance the doctor had of escaping. The pains still persisted in his back and head, but as long as he didn't move his head quickly it did not bother him much. He dozed off.

Semi-delirious visions floated disconnectedly; the ghastly bald head of Lörtzer lying on a pillow—the lights, chatter and the bray of a jazz band—the sunlight on the withered grass of the Battery.

Verhaeren woke him again by taking his temperature. Birskett actually hoped it was fairly high, which would give him the opportunity to play his game. When asked whether he felt better he groaned dismally and shook his head. He was rewarded with more chicken broth and quinin. When Verhaeren had gone he got up, intending to give himself another injection of antimony and arsenic, but he could not find his haversack, although his belt and revolver were hanging on the back of a chair.

Evidently they thought he was too weak to be dangerous he realized, yet the loss of the medicine depressed him. The drug was not a cure, but it would have helped to stave off the development a little and give strength. He crawled back into the bed thinking:

"Darn it; it doesn't matter much anyway as long as the doc's got away. I've played my part and that's all there is to it."

A little after, trying to imagine what had happened to Kirkton, he was aware that he must have swooned and that the machinery had gone wrong again. Excited voices reached him. He struggled hard to force his brain to comprehend and reason. As from afar, he at length recognized the voice of Friedlander saying in French with a slight accent:

"*Non, non, m'zieu'*, that is not true. I am not a *médecin*. I am Cornelius van der Byl, a naturalist of Amsterdam. This man who tells you that is a liar. He is not Dr. Kirkton. He is Dr. Kirkton's interpreter. He——"

"*Menteur!*" (liar) shouted Birskett feebly. "That man is Herr Doktor Friedlander of Hamburg!"

"Adolph Friedlander of Hamburg!" he heard Verhaeren exclaim.

"This man is not Dr. Keerkton?" demanded Strindhorst angrily.

"*Non, non, m'zieu'*, it is impossible. I myself saw Dr. Kirkton last night, yes."

Came an explosive sound from Verhaeren and the *chef du poste* saying—

"But where then is Dr. Keerkton?"

An undisguised German oath of exasperation rapped out and was followed by:

"I do not know, *mezzieurs*, on my honor. That bandit came to my camp last night and put a revolver to my head and made me give him certain drugs."

Birskett grinned feebly.

"He goes; it is sunset," the voice went on. "My men fear the dark as all these native pigs. In the morning I don't find him; neither him nor his two men."

"But," expostulated Strindhorst, "they can not go into air!"

"*Non, m'zieu'*. He has run away. The others of the natives I find lying asleep. They are drugged. *M'zieu' le médecin major* he will understand."

"Thank God," murmured the listener, "the doc fixed that all right! Now let the big noise come!"

The excitement of the news that the doctor had got away gave him momentary strength of mind and body. Now nothing mattered. He was free to strike at these darned thugs.

"He shall be brought back instantly. Bah, he can not escape!" the *chef du poste* was saying, when the 'big noise' arrived tumultuously into the tent as Birskett leaped for his revolver hanging to the chair.

VERHAEREN comprehended the move instantly and flung himself upon Birskett's back shrieking for help. Birskett tore himself loose and turning, caught him up and flung him bodily

into the faces of Strindhorst and Friedlander as they rushed in. Followed a chair amid the confusion. With a laugh Birskett wheeled and grabbed the holster.

But the flap, which he never used, had been left buckled. Oaths, shouts, and yells were echoed outside. Just as his fingers clutched the butt his strength went back on him treacherously. It was the last spurt. He crumpled from the knees downward. Oblivion took him——

When slowly and painfully he recovered his senses he thought at first he was still in the camp bed, but the light of dawn trickling through the clouds above the mountain peaks undeceived him.

He was clad in his rags and lying on grass beneath the giant Bombax tree. A silent figure with a bayonet moved against the dying moon. But before these simple facts had actually penetrated to the brain the morning twilight had fully come, and the blaring of the trumpet at reveille startled him dully.

Something was registered as being in his mouth. Wondering, he put up his hand and removed the substance and saw dimly a half-chewed piece of bread. Vaguely he recalled an *askari* placing food before him in the light of a fire. He must have gone to sleep in the act of eating. God! Was he as far gone as that?

Yet the reaction to the realization was feeble. He tried to rise. Violent pains shot through his head and spine. He sank back. Oh well, it didn't matter! Some time he'd——

He glided into a coma insensibly.

Motion once more aroused a partial comprehension of reality. He was being lifted into a hammock. There was a bustle about him. An askari with a devilish grin was cursing some one standing at his head.

"*Zut*, you won't have far to go," a faintly familiar voice was saying in French. "*Non, non*, not Matanda. *Pas la peine!* Don't bother! Drop him on the road!"

The hammock swung and jolted—scarlet trees swayed and moved overhead.

XVIII

DR. KIRKTON had little difficulty in drugging the natives. Before pretending to retire to his grass shelter he invited Zano and his tribesmen to drink some white man's beer, which was merely a compound of their own palm wine and water with some veronal.

When they had succumbed he gave them a good dose with the hypodermic syringe and packing their haversacks—the presence of Kubi fortunately enabled them to pack nearly all the food, boiled banana, chickens and half a goat, that they had in the camp, enough to last them until they reached the shack if ever they found it—and struck away through the hills for the loom of the mountains.

Kirkton was not as far advanced in trypanosomiasis as was Birskett. Whether he had been infected sooner or later he could not know, but the method mattered a lot; on whether the insertion of the proboscis of the tsetse fly was intra-veinous or intra-muscular depended the time in taking effect. As yet he had not had the prostrating fever and violent spinal pains, yet he knew by observation of his mental processes that there was no doubt that he had contracted the dread disease. Whether any of the natives had it he could not yet be sure for the rash is harder to discern on a native, and also the mental state more difficult to remark.

Once, threading through a small valley, they came suddenly upon cultivated fields and raised the yapping of village dogs. They had to retreat and make a detour, hoping that they had not been noticed as humans. To lessen the chance that their trail would be easy to follow the doctor walked bare-foot, happily for him not a very painful act in this region of soil and grass.

The moon was soaring above the peaks long before they came to the escarpment. At the bottom they stopped for half an hour to rest and readjust their loads for the steep climb. Then, scrambling and slipping, every loosened rock sounding like a thunderstorm, they began the ascent.

In the half-light, to pick a way was difficult. What were taken for dense shadows turned out to be slabs of sheer rock around which they had to hunt for a passage; bushes turned into boulders and boulders into bushes.

His feet torn and bleeding the doctor put on his boots only to find he could scarcely keep a grip on the steep slope. Sweat soaked him, and his load of the more precious instruments and drugs grew to his unaccustomed shoulders heavier than the

burden of Atlas. But, panting, he struggled on; for it was of great importance to reach the summit and hide beyond before any sharp eyes in a dawn-stirring village detect them silhouetted against the ridge.

Near the top came a wall of rock which seemed to be impassable and, in the light of the moon now shining directly upon it, to continue far on either side. He sent out Kubi and Matana to the left and with Zapoko searched on the other.

After some desperate climbing with no success he thought of remaining there during the day behind some bushes for shelter, when he could the more easily search the cliff with his binoculars. But without descending half-way down again there was no shelter to be had; there they would have to cling all day like flies to a wall, readily discernible from below.

Hanging on with one hand, he made another effort with the Zeiss to find the shadow of a break to the north, when a low hoot like an owl told Zapoko that the others had found something. It proved to be a crack through which poured icy cold water from the glaciers far above. By humping the lightest of them, Kubi, upon their shoulders, who pulled them one after another through narrow and wet apertures, they gradually worked through, sprawling over the edge of the escarpment as the dawn trickled through the now clouded peaks.

As they took a well-earned rest the doctor had more time to wonder what had happened to Birskett. From Kubi's account—and he could only relate that a quantity of askaris with three white men had arrived—he could not quite decide what had happened; but he made a shrewd guess by supposing that they had proved officious in some way by claiming that they were on Belgian ground and demanding explanations.

However, thought he, now that he had got away—providing that they did not overtake him—perhaps it was for the best as Birskett would at any rate be properly attended to; in the mean time, should he be successful, he might be able to send the cure in time to save him—for the actual time taken from the beginning of the coma stage to death varies exceedingly and can hardly be estimated from observed cases.

AHEAD of them rose slowly a wild plateau covered with huge boulders and bits of heath speckled thickly with flowers and scattered tree-ferns for several hundred yards to a wall-like line of the bamboo forest. Above, as he had seen from the valley, were jumbled broken cliffs, green covered, and vast ravines, down some of which he could glimpse the fall of water. At this time the morning mists were low, shutting out the glaciers and the new line.

They ate and hastened on to discover a fact the doctor had not before thought of, or the boys had any experience of—the impenetrability of a bamboo forest without the aid of knives. The young shoots are so dense and strong that for less than a great beast such as an elephant or a rhinoceros to force a way is next to impossible.

Depression—lately always lurking in the back of his mind—seized the doctor. He sat down on a damp rock and stared hopelessly. "God, to have gone through all this and to be held up on the very verge! Burn it?" he thought, but that green stuff and humid roots growing in wet moss would never burn.

"There are no people here?" he asked Matana.

"*Neda, sebo.*"

"Good God!" wailed the doctor despairingly. "What are we going to do?"

Then something seemed to clear in his brain.

"What a fool I am!" he added, but he knew stupidity was not the cause. "Why, of course, if Stoutt passed up to his shack he must have had a trail cut! Find it and that'll lead to the shack itself!"

Ten minutes consideration decided him to make the search to the north, striking more or less a little beyond Boko's village, which probably Stoutt had made his base.

Skirting the edge of the bamboo forest they plugged on; yet in spite of having to negotiate ravines and rocks the going was not so tiring as below on account of the cooler temperature. Night came and they had not yet discovered any trail or any passage that could be forced. They squatted down with their backs against a rock and ate.

With the fall of night came a keen wind like a wet blanket, but so close to the escarpment they dared not venture to light a fire. The damp was worse than the cold,

soaking the doctor's fragile tropical rags. He dozed for a while and then sat with his hands on his knees, grimly waiting for morning, fighting against the terrible depression that seemed gnawing him.

"The shack tomorrow, or we're done," he told himself, "for the cold will kill us and I'll never come down."

Three hours after sunrise Zapoko found traces of an overgrown trail through the forest. The young perennial shoots had grown so quickly in the eighteen months that it was already nigh impassable without knives. They did not reach the other side, torn and bleeding, until night-fall, but having that barrier between them they dared light a fire.

Before morning Kirkton was seized by a high temperature and violent pains. The track seemed to suggest turning to the north. Half a mile along, the forest was cut by a great ravine. Kirkton decided to follow the edge.

Anxiously he sought the snow-line with his glasses during the few minutes after the sunrise on the other side, the eastern, before the daily shroud was drawn, but no sign of the shack could he find. He injected a double dose of antimony and arsenic and staggered on.

The ground ahead was a wild mass of rocks and steep cliffs covered in lichen with ravines full of tree lobelias in flower and many plants like dog-roses in blossom.

His head seemed like a balloon full of heated gas; hot knives dissected his spine and shoulders. Two hours later he collapsed. However, the injection had done some good, for his temperature was down a little. He bade Zapoko take his precious load and cache his own, marking the place distinctly; then on he struggled again.

As he climbed with feet and hands, a sweat of agony poured out of him. But he fought on blindly, sometimes scarcely seeing a yard in front of him. Towards noon swirls of icy mist enveloped them refreshingly. Easy going tracts of small plateaux occurred, covered with mossy bog, and huge blue lobelias began to appear.

Rounding a curve, helped by two of the boys, the doctor let out a squawk at the sight of the tip of a glacier and scattered sprinklings of snow on the black rocks above. They wanted him to rest, but he would not, fearing indeed to stop.

"Shack or ——!" he muttered to himself.

THE men were almost done, but were inspirited by Kirkton's furious efforts. The sun was hovering over the Congo hills. Lobelias gave into flowered shrubs and homely blackberries—but these the doctor never noticed—and presently petered into tufts of grass clinging hardily on rocks. Flurries of snow pelted them in a gust. Yet there was no sign of a shack.

Ahead, black forbidding rocks stuck out angrily from patches of snow. The ravine they had followed had narrowed to a gorge, down which tumbled a water-fall from the glacier. Kirkton, nearly blinded by exhaustion, cried hoarsely to Kubi.

The boy did not understand the words, but grasped the meaning. Dropping his haversack, he scrambled ahead.

Presently as the doctor crawled on, he heard a wild shout. He peered painfully. Although he could not see Kubi above who was waving his hands, he could distinguish a bright light as in a window of a cottage.

"A light!" he muttered. "A light!" and collapsed.

XIX

LIKE the broken strands of a spider's web floating in a summer wind, Birskett's streaks of consciousness were as gossamery and uncertain.

A brazen blue surface, against which flitted in black contrast palm and banana fronds, leafy branches, euphorbia tops and spears of tall grass-heads appeared to him. Sometimes like a vast shadow loomed a vaguely familiar face with bright liquid eyes and small black mustaches—men chattered by fire-light, a few unremembered words were addressed to a white man—food and coffee tasted——

A repetition of the previous day, except that suddenly the blue seemed unaccountably extinguished, never to come back, was exchanged for a canopy of splotches of vivid green shot with giant limbs all reeling in a manner which hurt the eyes; and he was dimly aware of the fact that the swaying was no longer rhythmical but jolted, stopped, and slipped feet foremost and then upwards.

Then these sense impressions ceased altogether. The world beneath and above remained solidly still. Over him a great branch of a tree festooned with rope-like creepers and moss stretched against a

dense mass of leafy foliage. A vast yet incurious wonder possessed him. What could it be? Why? How was it that those other sensations had ceased?

His mind seemed to yawn tiredly and not very interestedly after the answer which floated indistinctly just beyond him somewhere.

Around his face was a whirling swarm of mosquitoes and he pondered impersonally why a bare arm was black, but the question seemed as insolvable as the riddle of the sphinx. A harsh shriek sounded and vivid colors of scarlet and yellow flitted in the gloom——

A branch seemed to become detached and descend toward him in a sinuous body splotched with greens and more yellows and queer black smudges, unwound until one end with bright tiny eyes seemed looking at him in polite inquiry; then coiling over his legs, the apparition melted into the surrounding scenery.

Another moving creature of many hues appeared like a dulled flash, sat on his chest, with queer toes and weeny feet, peered at him with pink eyes like wabbling beads, and was gone.

Then came a face, an old face with two very bright eyes and a funny black nose above curious gray whiskers. It jabbered at him, showing white teeth. What did he want? Who could he be? The doctor? But the doctor hadn't a black nose. Others appeared all about. And why were they angry? He yawned. He couldn't be bothered anyway. He wanted to sleep.

Uncouth small shapes—the last apperceptions were burned into his consciousness—recalled the doctor and a stirring feeble wonder what he wanted and why he was brown and naked.

The gloom had changed to darkness save for a globular patch of vague light which frequently seemed to go out. Sometines liquids and soft matter entered his mouth. Noises, too, penetrated into this dream world; queer tiny cries, broken gobblings, and a soft booming, accompanied by grunts and rhythmical quivering——

Then Robert Birskett awoke as a Rip Van Winkle from an age-long sleep.

He sighed, stirred and tried to rise. Surprize at the feeble response of his limbs was the very first emotion. He struggled with difficulty on to his right elbow and stared at the luminous globe. Slowly he made out trodden grass and beyond, vivid green foliage. He put out a hand and touched grass and branches and was conscious of a peculiar smell. A hut! And the smell was native. He was in a native hut.

His brain still worked slowly, and it took him perhaps minutes to absorb this information.

"Gosh, where in thunder am I?"

The sound of his own voice startled him; yet he laughed mildly.

A puling cry sounded, followed by a gobbling which was reminiscent.

"Child," he interpreted solemnly interested, "and the mother—but what lingo is that? Sounds like a monkey. Good Lordy, the monkeys can't have——"

He began to laugh again like a child pleased by its own crowing and then ceased.

"My God, the doc!"

The recollection sobered and jerked him into manhood. He stared worriedly at the globe of light and then lay back to think the better by easing his aching elbow.

THE last happening he could recall clearly, any act that was definitely linked to reality, was throwing the Belgian doctor across the tent and fumbling for his gun. But since then the vague images and sensations were as tenuous as the fragments of a half-forgotten dream; so fragile that he could not be sure whether they had occurred or were the figments of a nightmare?

But the hut was real. He put out his fingers to verify it, and then clapped his hand to his forehead which was warm but clammy with natural sweat; not in the least feverish. Quite unconsciously, in letting his hand relax, he found that he was naked, and covered in some sticky ointment.

The discovery compelled a similar reaction to that of a sleep-walker caught in Broadway in his night shirt, checked by the knowledge of his environment.

"Stark naked! And in a native hut!" He summed up his discoveries. "But why? And where? I guess I'd better find out."

Slewing himself up and around on to his hands he crawled on all fours to the tiny globular hole which was the door and poked his head through.

"Man!" he ejaculated and stared at what in the twilight of the forest resembled an assembly of gnomes.

Four dwarfs, as naked as he was, were squatting in front of another small hut whittling, apparently, pieces of stick. Their heads, densely thatched, seemed enormous and on the chocolate brown bodies—even the football-like bellies—was fine black wool. The face of one was puckered and had a dirty grayish smudge on the receding chin. The simian mouth gobbled beneath the flattened nose.

"Pigmies!" whispered the white.

To the left, and apart, were three similar figures, females, on their hams around a small fire with piles of what looked like mushrooms brightly colored, scarlet, yellow, emerald and blue, which their tiny hands were popping into a calabash steaming like a witches' caldron.

Birskett withdrew inside the hut and sat down to try to think the position out. It was evident that they were friendly to him. By recalling the series of disconnected flutterings of consciousness, he could fairly well follow that the Belgians had sent him off in a hammock. Then by association the word "hammock" shot into his mind the words of the *chef du poste!*

"*Pas la peine!* Drop him on the road!"

He growled a muttered oath. But that cleared up the problem of what had happened. Dropped him they had in the forest and these wild creatures must have picked him up and cared for him.

"Mighty strange," he reflected, "for they are known to be the most ferocious and at the same time the most timid, of all the Africans."

Then, as his mind warmed up and ran the more smoothly, an obvious fact leaped at him. Apparently the sickness had left him.

But how could it have? Antimony and arsenic was no cure—not permanent at any rate. That he knew from conversation with the doctor and technical articles he had read on the voyage out and at Entebbe. At one time the doctors had thought that that compound was a remedy; many patients had appeared to be cured, but in every case only to relapse with fatal effects.

Perhaps that was his condition. The natural man in him drooped at the conclusion. But another thought gave him wild hope; he might yet have life and strength enough to join the doctor. The idea quickened every nerve in him.

And again, reflection recalled that the doctor had never examined his blood. The rash? Some mere blood disorder might have been mistaken for the fatal sympton, influenced by suggestion. The fever might have been severe malaria and perhaps spirilum combined. Why, Kirkton had not even definitely said that in his opinion Birskett had trypanosomiasis!

"Good ——, I guess I've never had the darned thing at all!" he exclaimed. "Nearly fooled myself to death with sheer funk! That darned Belgian runt, by Goshormighty! I'll get him yet. I'll get those boys of Boko together and wipe out the son-of-a-gun! And then by Heavens they'll let me do any old thing on the tabu ground and——"

He stopped. The promise of life rushing back upon him had made him drunk. He was weak, naked as Adam, and the Lord only knew where, in the hands of pigmies!

"Of course I'm weak," he grumbled to himself, "after that bout and living native for so long. Lordy, but how am I going to get out of this mess? I ought to get off right away to the doc. Perhaps he's bad too."

Then he stopped chatting to himself. How long had he been there? He had no means whatever of finding out. Even if his watch were on his belt—if he could recover it—it would surely have stopped. Even if he could make himself understood the pigmies would have no sense of time. He sat disheartened for a while. Then life and hope began to flush together. He stuck his head out of the hole and shouted—

"Hey, Father Adam!"

The eldest of the four, the puckered-faced one, scarcely four feet high, seemed to know his name, for immediately he rose and came over, gobbling at the white man as he squatted before him. Birskett shook his head and tried him in Luganda and Kiswahili. But the little fellow gobbled on, and from his ample and eloquent gestures, Birskett gathered that he was very pleased. The other three joined him, and all four talked.

Lacking any other method he fell back on sign language. At first they appeared to think that he was asking them to admire his nude figure!

After much pantomiming in the open they got the idea, but from frequent head-shaking accompanied by a persistent kind of *cluck*, pointing to their own bodies;

Birskett understood that they had found him naked.

If the Belgian lieutenant had ordered him to be abandoned, the askaris would have taken care that no useful article was left upon him.

"Suppose they thought I was dead pretty nigh," he mused. Had they been left alone they'd surely have eaten me; darned lucky the ——s didn't mutilate me."

After duly cussing out his late hosts he decided that the next effort would be for food. He was easily understood and rewarded with half-singed antelope and a stew of what looked like roots of some sort and those chromatic mushrooms the women had been cooking.

"I wonder what made 'em look after me?" he wondered as he tore off lumps of flesh, native fashion, the whole tribe watching him.

"Guess the old shrimp must be the chief. If he wasn't a pigmy I'd think I'd seen him before. H'm. Gosh, that's good. These vegetables taste fine—a bit bitter like spinach. I'd better eat my head off while I can and try to pantomime these fellows into helping me back to Bokoland. In this confounded forest you can't see where the mountains are, so it's no use pointing. M-mum. The sun is the only chance."

The meat had the effect of wine. He felt as if strength was pouring into his veins and muscles. A reaction after the physical and nervous collapse gripped him. He began to chant:

"You are old, father Adam, the young man said,
And you're getting most horribly fat!
I shouldn't be shocked to hear you are dead!
Now what d'you know about that?

"You are old, father Adam, the young man said,
And your beard has become very gray!
I wonder you'd mind just to stand on your head,
And please to point out the right way?

"Good Lord, I'm getting childish!" exclaimed Birskett laughing almost hysterically as the audience chattered with much delight. "Well, I guess if you like it——

"Lordy, that's it!" he exclaimed. "Gray! Why, that gray tuft of whiskers! That's where I've seen him before! That's why he's so mighty keen on playing the good Samaritan stunt. He's the little old runt the gorilla was after!"

He rose and touched his own and the old fellow's chest and mimicked the stoop of the gorilla gathering fungus which resembled Indian pipes, the shooting, and the fall of the beast. The chorus of gobbles and clucks confirmed his theory. He came back, took the withered little hand and placed it on his chest as far as the man could reach and placed his own on the pigmy's shoulder. Again the primitive symbolism was understood and accepted.

"Fine! Brothers!" agreed Birskett, grinning, and they all grinned industriously.

After this satisfactory sealing of the alliance, a tiny pipe was produced from a woolly thatch and proffered to him.

HOW was a man, stark naked, set in the middle of the dense jungle among pigmies, to start a plan of campaign against the Belgians; or even contrive to join the doctor? That was the stiff problem Birskett had to solve.

Clothes he could not make out of leaves sufficiently durable to afford enough protection against the sun in the open. The sanest scheme he could hunt up was to endeavor to find Boko or his tribe who, knowing him, would be inclined to help him as far as lay in their power. In the mean time the first thing was to recover strength.

His constitution aided him. Within four or five days he was fit enough to walk a considerable distance. The following day, as if the chief had noticed the fact, he saw by the preparations that the tiny tribe was about to move. He decided to make every effort now to persuade them to go towards the mountains, the direction of which he had carefully marked by observing the glare of the westering sun through the canopy of the vast trees.

Of course he had no idea what distance the Belgians had had him carried; nor whether they had crossed the Semliki river. However, Kikkik, as he understood the old chief's name to be, as soon as he grasped what the white required, seemed only too pleased to consent.

But they were as solicitous of him as a hen with a brood, marching but the shortest of distances, the tiny women carrying their calabashes, spare bows and arrows, and knives and tobacco, which constituted their only household effects. At night they roosted in swiftly made shelters in

the lower limbs of trees. During the day the men disappeared for hunting, usually to return with either buck or bird; flesh and roots, berries and fungus were their daily fare. The poison for their tiny arrows, he learned, was made from crushed ants and decomposing meat and had no deleterious effect upon the rest of the flesh. The sticky ointment, he discovered, was made from a pungent herb and kept off most of the flies and bugs, but not, he noticed, the ferocious tsetse.

Kikkik loved to spend hours trying to teach the white man his language, and in a few days Birskett picked up enough simple words for every-day needs. He was surprized at the intelligence they evidently possessed; perhaps that, he reflected, was the reason that they were so careful to keep from contact with any others save their own kindred!

Indeed they appeared very happy; their needs were little and those supplied by small exertion. Of the gorilla they had evidently more fear than of any other living creature; more apparently than of the white man. Once they encountered another family of nine pigmies who at first seemed very desirous of attacking the strange white giant, but afterwards were as friendly as children.

So Birskett marched on slowly, hoping that soon they would at least come to a break in the forest where he might get his bearings, ever chewing upon the problem to be solved, and undoubtedly gaining strength with an extraordinary rapidity.

XX

WHICH Roman Emperor said that "All roads led to Rome?" Leopold might well have amended the saying by "Many roads lead to the Congo!"

Were you an official in a Belgian bank suffering from a shortage in the accounts? A corporal hankering after the sweets of Junkerdom? A Dutch *ambtenaar* bewailing the dearth of pickings? A Parisian apache who had bungled an affair on the slopes of Montmartre? Honor and cash would have awaited you all, gentlemen—in the Congo!

The concessions provided rubber and ivory unlimited. There was but one condition—get it!

In the good old days these things were, but now all such evil is banished.

M'sieu', le mèdecin major Verhaeren, annoyed by the vigilance of the Brussels' police, had accepted that invitation; also Karl Strindhorst had decided to take a cure for an inability to distinguish between his own wife and a superior officer's; Signor Villino had been suffering from the disgraceful refusal of a rival to recover from a stiletto wound in the back.

Although the perquisites attendant on good service, diligence and a strict attention to duty, were capable within a few years, of reinstating black sheep in a respectable position—in a fairer clime—the life and climate were fatiguing to the delicate constitution of a gentleman.

Several articles in a medical review had led to the profound reflection that nearly a million francs would be worth winning even at a little sacrifice; hence the presence of the trio nobly braving the perils of the sleeping sickness and the pigmies in the interest of mankind.

After the disposal of the impostor, Verhaeren and Strindhorst held a council. The first doctor had to be dealt with. The sole question was, what did he know? Already arrested on the formal charge of trespassing on His Majesty's domain—the anomaly of the Free State of the Congo and a Majesty's domains never seemed to strike them—Friedlander was brought before them. Verhaeren once fooled was not now inclined to be diplomatic; but this man was not Dr. Kirkton, the actual interviewer of Lörtzer.

Friedlander now acknowledged frankly that he was a scientist of Hamburg and also admitted that the object of his mission was to discover the lost cure. The whereabouts of Kirkton he swore he did not know, and brought the men who were with him, native and his own servants, to corroborate the statement. His emphatic sentences when speaking on the subject seemed to convince the sceptical Verhaeren.

Could they not, suggested Friedlander suavely, unite in the search for this missing villain? For his part he was a scientist merely, engaged in research, and to whom the material rewards were nothing as long as humanity benefited; whereas this American, as he had proof, had obtained confidential confessions from the sick bed of the illustrious Herr Professor Lörtzer which he sought to make use of for obvious base purposes. Everybody knew that America was the land of the dollar, said he.

They must, he assured them, do their utmost to capture this Dr. Kirkton; for he had reason to believe that the natives had communicated something to him regarding the whereabouts of the missing effects of Dr. Stoutt; indeed he would not be surprized that they had connived at the extraordinary disappearance. There was in reason no other solution to the mystery.

"The chief then will duly communicate the facts to us," stated Strindhorst.

"I don't think so *messieurs!*" said Friedlander. "I beg your pardon, but they are most unusually stupid. I have reason to believe that this Dr. Kirkton convinced them that he was the brother of Dr. Stoutt by showing them some article that he had brought from America—possibly merely a hat or a bangle of Dr. Stoutt's. You know how gullible these natives are. What would you?"

This statement, a purely imaginative conjecture of Friedlander's, impressed the officials.

They consulted apart and decided that, although they did not believe his professions of altruism, he was not dangerous and might be useful. They recalled him, and graciously accepted his offer—in the name of King Leopold!—informing him that they would now deal with the chief in a manner befitting a master.

Friedlander's wily slit eyes narrowed as he turned his head to observe the view. He knew the men he was up against; also he summed up the technical knowledge of the *médecin major*. If he played his game well he might use these clumsy boors.

Let them find the missing notes of the American scientist. Verhaeren would, he was sure, be too ignorant to recognize a formula of the cure when he saw it; he, Friedlander, would merely attract his attention to some other formula and walk off with the prize. The only serious matters that worried him were the whereabouts and the actions of Kirkton.

Immediately, while the sun was still obscured by the mountains and clouds, the *chef du poste* sent for Boko and his notables.

SEATED before the three green tents beneath the huge scarlet Bombax tree the *chef du poste* and Verhaeren with Friedlander received the native chief and his councilors. Around them, drawn up in military formation, were the askaris, big ebony-black fellows recruited from a tribe of cannibals notorious for their ferocity.

In spite of the impressive show of the whites in white and gold and the military pomp Boko, the chief, wore the old shirt of Dr. Stoutt's, as he strode before them, with the dignity of a Roman bearing the purple. He was outraged, angry, but not a muscle of the bronze face showed a quiver of emotion. Yarazoo, in his mauve pants sagging down one side of his skinny hip, looked like an ancient Hamite chieftain risen from the grave, the tortoise-like head bearing insignia of his profession held motionless, unseeing.

A giant of a black sergeant with the filed teeth of his tribe stood bold upright beside the noble representative of a distant white king who thought no courteous greeting necessary, a fact which hurt and confused the native mind more than the startling assertions that their country was not their own.

"Tell him," said Strindhorst in a dialect of Kiswahili, "that I wish to know what he means by saying that his people do not know where that white man has gone to."

"*Ezikide!*" (He has vanished!) the phrase seemed a kind of ventriloquism, for the lips scarcely moved.

"*Tonimba, nkima!*" (Don't lie to me, monkey!) snapped the big sergeant.

Neither the bronze face nor the eyes of the chief flickered.

"*Owulide, mbwa?*" (D'you hear, dog?)

"*Pulide.*" (I hear.)

"What does he say?" interrupted Strindhorst irritably.

"The ape refuses to answer, *bwana.*"

"*Pardon, m'zieu',*" interrupted Friedlander, who was anxious to prevent the brute of a sergeant from destroying any valuable information that the parade of force might frighten out of the natives. "*Pardon, m'zieu',* the chief said he did not know."

"*Diable!*" growled Strindhorst. "Who asked you to interfere?"

"*Non, non, non! Attendez!*" whispered Verhaeren. "He understands this monkey language. Let him interpret."

"*Pense-tu!*" retorted Strindhorst with an ugly laugh, and added to the sergeant. "You interpret exactly what this animal says or I'll flog the black hide off you. Understand?"

"*Bwana! kwell!*" (Truly, master!) asserted the sergeant and grinned at his triumph.

"Don't terrify him yet," whispered Verhaeren "or he'll be so scared he won't answer."

"*Ecoute, mon vieux!*" said Strindhorst roughly. "D'you think you know these beasts better than I do? Haven't I lived among the pigs for five years and thou——"

"*Si, si!*" replied Verhaeren soothingly.

"Tell him," continued Strindhorst while Friedlander's eyes smiled at the scarlet Bombax branch, "that if he doesn't tell me the truth I'll flog him."

This the sergeant interpreted literally. There was no response nor movement.

"Now," said the *chef du poste*, "ask him where his men are who were—" he hunted for a word for drugged—"put to sleep by this man."

"Animal," said the sergeant, "where are thy monkeys who were made dead by the white man and brought to life afterwards?"

"They are bewitched and have fled," returned Boko mendaciously.

Then he was informed that he was to have them recalled within one day or—the sergeant interpreted with gesticulations of his own.

"What was the name of the man he talked about before? The name of the white doctor who is dead, fool?" as the sergeant gazed blankly.

"The Giver of Life, *bwana?*" for Boko naively had spoken of him as he had to the Americans.

"*Indio*, ask him again what has become of his body?

"*Ezikide*," replied Boko tonelessly.

"The creature says it has gone out."

"Tell him I'll flog——"

"Wait, wait!" implored Verhaeren. "Ask him about the books first."

"*Nom de* ——, art thou the *chef du poste* or am I?" grumbled Strindhorst, but he repeated the question to the interpreter.

"He says, *bwana*, that he does not know of what you speak."

"Tell him that if he doesn't find his tongue I'll cut his hide off."

"*Indio, bwana.*"

The sergeant repeated the threat with gusto. There was no reply.

"That creature there," demanded Strindhorst, suddenly pointing to Yarazoo. "What is it?"

"He is the witch-doctor," replied the sergeant.

"What's that fool headdress thing he's got on his head?"

"He says it's great medicine, *bwana.*"

"What does it do? What is it?"

"He says it is a weed which makes him always young," returned the sergeant with a contemptuous sneer.

"*Nom de* ——, he looks it!" said Strindhorst in French, laughing at what he considered his own joke. "Superstitious brutes! Pah! Sergeant, ask him where the books and papers of the dead white man are? He'll know if anybody does," he added to Verhaeren. "The fools would think they were great medecine, as he calls it."

"*Nini, nkima?*" (What, monkey?) shouted the sergeant when Yarazoo had mumbled his reply.

"What does he say?"

"He says, *bwana*, that he is deaf and has not heard what——"

"*Lekerawo!*" (Shut up!) interrupted Friedlander, and added:

"*Pardon, m'zieu'*, but the man did not say that. He said that the white men are as foolish as a bird pecking at the shell of a tortoise."

Strindhorst stared at him, angrily tugging at a mustache, doubtful for the moment whether Friedlander or the native was making a fool of him.

"What d'you mean?" he growled.

"He means," said Friedlander with a slight smile, "that you will never get anything out of them by those methods."

"*Quoi!*" shouted Strindhorst enraged. "—— I'll teach 'em who's master. ——, they want a lesson and they'll have it."

"*Mais, écoutez,*" interrupted Verhaeren feebly, "let's try to——"

"*Ta gueule!*" (Shut your jaw!) growled Strindhorst, jumping to his feet in a rage. "Sergeant, lay that animal out and give him thirty—to begin with."

As the sergeant coughed orders in military style the *chef du poste* thumped down in his chair, a berserker rage in his blue eyes.

Verhaeren mumbled—

"Oh, la la!" disgustedly, and Friedlander turned aside to shrug his shoulders.

A CORPORAL marched up six men and surrounded Yarazoo. A keen observer would have remarked that the witch-doctor swiftly put his hand to his mouth.

One askari, seizing him, threw him roughly on to his face; another with a whip of hippopotamus hide, stood over him looking with expectancy towards the *chef du poste*, who nodded.

At the first lash the mauve pants were split. At the tenth they were streaked with blood, but the prostrate figure neither flinched nor yelled. The swish of the whip and the impact sounded clearly in the still, hot air.

Boko's face, cast in bronze, was turned as if indifferently contemplating the grass at his feet; and so was every one of his men's! At the thirtieth the askari stopped, peered at the victim, and, disappointed that he had failed to produce a single scream, angrily kicked the skinny body and looked around anxiously.

"The man seems dead," said Friedlander casually.

"Is the animal dead?" demanded Strindhorst.

"*Siwezi, bwana,*" (I dont know, master) returned the askari and catching an arm jerked the figure on to the back. The ancient head lolled sidewise, and the limbs fell listlessly.

"*Indio Kufa,*" (Yes, dead,) added the askari disgustedly.

"Take it away then!" ordered Strindhorst as indignant as the askari at the lack of sport. "And see what this other animal's made of."

"*Indio, bwana!*" chorused the askaris joyfully.

Disdaining to employ more than one man, an askari caught up the legs and dragged the body of Yarazoo through the ranks into the grass, and with a final disgusted kick left him to be attended to later—in the pot if they had a chance, bony as he was.

"Wait!" roared Strindhorst, as they roughly yanked the chief to the place of execution. "Sergeant, ask the brute whether he will reply or not?"

The sergeant put the question, embroidered with suitable threats. But the features never moved, not even the contemplative eyes regarding the grass in front of him.

"The monkey is sulky, *bwana,*" said the sergeant with an anticipatory grin.

Strindhorst swore and nodded to the man with the *kiboko.*

"Give him sixty," he added, and the blacks grinned with delight.

With the first swish of the whip through the air came a muffled grunt from Boko's men squatting in a circle, echoed by the remainder, who had assembled without the square of armed askaris. Strindhorst glanced towards them with the lust of slaughter in his eyes. He, too, grunted but said nothing, and fastened his cold blue eyes on the prostrate chief.

At the thirtieth blow a groan was forced. The back from the shoulders to the thighs was bloodily wealed; for the askari had deliberately chosen a fresh spot each time, returning carefully upon the wounds.

"Enough!" commanded Strindhorst at the fifty-seventh. "Ask the brute again, sergeant."

The corporal roughly jerked the chief on to his bleeding haunches to answer the questions. His features were an ashy greenish color, but the eyes were still bright and deliberately regarded space; the lips did not move.

"Give the sulky swine another sixty," ordered Strindhorst and there was a high note of excitement in the voice.

"*Indio, bwana!*" said the black sergeant exultantly and barked the order.

As the lashes began again Verhaeren leaned towards the *chef du poste* whispering:

"But he can't stand another sixty. You'll kill him. Let me examine him."

"*Ta gueule!*" almost shouted Strindhorst now seemingly in a frenzy. "I'll have the bastard cut to pieces alive if I want to. I'll teach 'em to lie to me! Give him a hundred!" he bawled at the askari.

"Rub some salt in," said Friedlander quietly, whose green eyes were watching the scene like a cat playing with a mouse. "It will revive him, although you've made a mistake *m'zieu'*. A little fire is more effective in extracting secrets and——"

THE monotony of the swishes was broken by a loud cry from the crowd of Boko's men, and was echoed immediately by a screaming yell from the bush, a howling war-cry. The ringing *kiboko* hung in the air as the natives leaped to their feet.

"*Mon Dieu!*" began timid Verhaeren wriggling from his chair. "They will——"

Simultaneously Strindhorst with an oath sprang up and drawing his revolver, fired into the mass of Boko's men as he shouted an order to the askaris to bayonet them.

Twenty blades flashed eagerly in the sun.

During the massacre Strindhorst stood, revolver in hand tugging ferociously at his mustaches, watching and listening. Friedlander backed against the tree nervously, being unarmed. Verhaeren began to shout hysterically—

"They're attacking us!"

One man, only a knife in his hand with an askari after him leaped forward at the *chef du poste* who coolly shot him, and walking across, blew out the brains of the prostrate chief.

At that moment crashed a volley of shots from the askaris as a handful of villagers charged wildly. Wheeling about, Strindhorst glanced at the slaughter. None of the natives lived. Striding forward, he shouted to the sergeant to advance and burn the village.

And it was done as thousands of others before!

They took no prisoners, neither man, woman, nor child.

As the smoke swirled in a column in the still hot air of noon Verhaeren danced with rage under the scarlet Bombax tree wailing:

"*Mais, mon Dieu*, the imbecile may have burnt those notes. Oh, la la! Oh, la la!"

And Friedlander, squatting at the base, smiled contemptuously at the crudity of the methods employed.

But neither white man saw fifty yards away a skeleton of a figure with rags of blood and mauve hanging to his ancient limbs crawling painfully through the long grass.

XXI

AMONG the jumbled foot-hills to the southwest of the camp from which Kirkton had started for the mountains in one of the denser groves of bananas were gathered some five hundred of the tribe; for fear of the askaris they dared not assemble in any village. Although all were armed they talked in muffled tones, testifying to the effect of the massacre and the burning.

In the centre of the throng sat Yarazoo and three of his brethren of the craft, the chief's ninth son, for the others had been slain, and Zano, he of the wrist-watch.

The calamity which had befallen them was the more overwhelming in that their previous dealings with whites had rendered them confident and friendly. True, they had heard of the doings of the Bulamatadi from afar; but then distant disasters are never very convincing; those terrible things had happened to other tribes; whereas, were not they, the Tiny Children of the Mountain, under the protection of the Giver of Life?

The whole affair, the thrashing of Yarazoo, the death of their chief, the massacre of his sons and the elders and the terrible effects of the askaris' Snider rifles was on the level of a miracle; something not understandable to the human mind. Even in their wars with other tribes the sacredness of a *shauri* and the dignity of a chief had never been thus betrayed.

There were many who asserted that they were not white men at all but evil spirits, *Ahuu*, taking the human shape; and in proof, said they, had they not nigh done to death the white man, He-who-laughs, brother of the Giver of Life? And had he not said that they were powerful and wicked? Where was he now, the big man who had dwelt with them as a brother?

"Eh!" said another, "but what of the other, he who has 'vanished?' Was that not more of the magic of these devils?"

"Nay, nay," contradicted others, outraged by this approach to blasphemy, "had he not 'vanished' as had the Giver of Life?"

"Ehh! That was indeed true. Likely that he knew of the coming of these *Ahuu* and had left his big brother to warn them. Yet why had he not aided them, made magic against them?"

"Yet," argued another, "had not the Bulamatadi with all their askaris and white magic been unable to kill their witch-doctor, Yarazoo? Ehh! But his magic was powerful! He would be able to make medicine that should prevail against them!"

So disputed the mob. But in the circle of the elders and witch-doctors other opinions prevailed. Yarazoo who for five days had lain in a hut in the bush making magic—apparently by lying on the grass bed covered with ointment made from his own specifics—had bidden his professional brethren and deputations of warriors from all the tribe for a great *shauri*. His own prestige considerably augmented by the judicious use of a herbal drug which produced almost a complete anesthesia of the flesh, he advocated a general attack on the camp which the Belgians were making some

five hundred yards to the north of the site of the old village.

Success was insured, he guaranteed, by the assistance of medicine which he was preparing.

But there were two factions which opposed this plan. One, led by the ninth and eldest surviving son of Boko, was terrified by the disaster and claimed that no human beings could expect to survive the flaming fire-sticks of the terrible black devils; another band, of a more religious turn of mind, protested that the Giver of Life had solemnly forbidden them to injure any white, referring to the apostle conversant with the sayings of the departed master, the unhappy Zano, who, filled with rage, was strong for the war party, but was confuted out of his own mouth.

Yarazoo after saying his say squatted as silent as a Maori effigy, listening to the disputes around him. Like an old sage he let them talk for two days until, reckoning his time, he suddenly announced that he had arranged to procure such powerful medicine from the Bulamatadi themselves that they would be overcome as easily as plucking bananas. Simultaneously with this calculated statement was heard a low but piercing ululation proclaiming the coming of their own people.

IN COMPLETE silence presently there stalked through the grove fifty warriors headed by a young chief who bore upon a spear-blade a gory head of a white man with black mustaches and imperial. Deep chest grunts applauded this and the heads of askaris borne by the followers.

When they had laid the ghastly trophies before Yarazoo he spoke briefly and to the point. These were the promised powerful medicine! And so were the factions silenced.

Next morning runners sped to the south, where dwelt the bulk of the tribe and allied tribes, for none of these was very big, bearing the war-message and bidding them assemble at a rendezvous near the forest to the west.

For five days a great dance was held, and every warrior was smeared with a magical concoction.

Four days later, when the clouds above the mountain peaks were paling, a sentry's shot rang out. Spears glimmered like butterflies in the grass. Howls on the slopes were answered by convulsive but merciless spurts of red flames; and then swiftly by the sputter at each end of the camp of two demons hysterically coughing sudden death.

The witch-doctor's extract of the handsome Villino's head prevailed not and the Tiny Children of the Mountain fled.

The defeat was a grave set-back to the prestige of Yarazoo. He cursed his men for cowards, but that was their first experience of machine-guns and volley firing. They were cowed. Many talked of immediate submission, recalling the words of He-who-laughs advising them to submit; others cried that the Giver of Life had himself forbidden them to attempt to injure a white man. Was not this the terrible penalty?

But boldly Yarazoo called again a big *shauri* and announced that he had made more magic, magic that this time should call to their aid no less than the brother of the Giver of Life himself.

Eh! And behold there limped into the grove before the astonished eyes of the warriors wounded and hale, the tall gaunt figure of a bearded white man having upon his head a plaited cone of wild banana fronds and about his bony body a girdle of woven grass.

"Eh!" grunted the warriors as Birskett squatted beside Yarazoo.

"*Mulabe, mwami! Mulabe, mwami! wewao! webale—wao! webale—wao!*" (Greeting chief, thanks very much, yes!) they chorused.

"*Agafewamwe, bunange?*" (How are things at home my friends?)

"*Nungi, mwami, webale—wao!*" (Fine, chief, thanks very much!)

"*Erade?*"

"*Erade!* (All well) *Webale—wao!*"

After this polite greeting, for it is a direct invitation to the spirits ever to admit that things are bad, a deep silence fell, all eyes regarding with reverence and hope the miraculously resurrected white man.

Then after compliments, Yarazoo, who had by silent consent taken the rôle of chief until the necessary formalities of appointing the successor should be made, dismissed the crowd. He was satisfied that once more not only had he retrieved his prestige as a powerful witch-doctor, but that, human-like, his past dreadful and

costly error was already nigh forgotten in the excitement of the latest miracle. All of them he sent away even Zano and Boko's son. While they were going young girls brought calabashes of goat's milk of which Birskett was known to be fond. Then Yarazoo, dropping a little of the native rigamarole as if between professionals, recounted all that had happened since Birskett had been sent to seeming death.

After Birskett had put a few questions, he told the story, as much as he saw fit, of his sojourn among the pigmies. His tale astonished the ancient, although he said no word, because of the white man's power over these wild men of the forest who are more feared by the native than any living animal, biped or quadruped.

A hut of grass in the temporary camp had already been prepared for him and he was glad to lie down.

Birskett had discovered from the natives that he had been away nearly a month. Heaven knew what had happened to the doctor during that time. His need for clothes was imperative. The tribe certainly could not supply him with a helmet, the most necessary; half an hour of an unprotected head in the rays of the equatorial sun would be swifter death than sleeping sickness. The primitive hat of banana fronds was neither durable nor manageable. Boots too. His feet were almost a bloody mass. Walking slowly in the forest from root to root, on marsh and moss, had been easy compared to the reed and stuff of the swamp which he had had to cross between that and the foot-hills.

That confounded Yarazoo was just as stubborn about any kind of tabu as ever he had been, he reflected savagely. Yet if he could devise some means of overcoming the Belgians—and he had quite a score to pay himself—they would surely make a chief of him. Then he would be able to handle matters as he would.

That the Tiny Children of the Mountain had been repulsed easily did not surprize Birskett at all. They were not numerous enough, even if they could have stood the shock, to overwhelm the garrison of two hundred *askaris* and two machine-guns. Contemplating the situation, Birskett grew despondent.

He had nothing save his wits and bare hands—and even then he had not yet got back his normal strength. But somehow the problem had to be solved. But how?

They brought him food and he ate wolfishly; in spite of the heat he had always now a sharp hunger. At last the germ of an idea began to develop; hazardous truly, but the only one he could see.

"It's a mighty good job," he mused, "I'm an amateur dacoit and still better that those sentries aren't Ghurkas!"

He could give the natives he believed a chance to win through, but the drawback was that the rest of the plan depended upon them. He sent for Yarazoo.

To him such of his scheme as he thought judicious to communicate he did, naturally wrapped in the native mold of sorcery. An important point was—would Yarazoo, or could he, anoint them with special magic so that they would attack in the night?

Yarazoo with much circumlocution explained that such a thing had never been done. Although his magic was surely proof against the spirits for warriors *en masse* so that they could travel and hide awaiting the usual attack at dawn, when the spirits of the night were actually abroad they could wreak dreadful work upon any single man separated, as during a fight, from his fellows.

Patiently Birskett went over the ground again, emphasizing that he would guarantee the successful delivering of the Belgians into their hands should the natives carry out his instructions.

"To the brethren of the Giver of Life, my friend," returned Yarazoo solemnly, "such things are as a lizard catching flies, but to the weak Children of the Mountain the spirits of the night are powerful. None can withstand them, and they be of malicious mind."

For the first time self-control, strengthened by experience and practise, nearly broke into a loud and hearty curse. He changed the subject native style.

"My friend," said he, "where is he now that was my friend, Eyes-of-a-bird, that went forth with Zano and his men?"

"*Ezikide,*" returned Yarazoo as Birskett knew he would.

"Even as the Giver of Life has vanished?"

"*Simanyi, munange,*" (I don't know, friend) replied Yarazoo, his tortoise-features beginning to freeze palpably.

"O Yarazoo, lend me thine ear. Knowest thou well that should the power of the

Bulamatadi not be broken that indeed they will eat up thy people until none be left but slaves and concubines?"

"Wao, munange!"

"Knowest thou that when they lay hands upon thee that thou shalt be served even as was Boko the chief?"

"Wao," agreed Yarazoo whose dignity had forbidden him to tell the white man of his own beating and escape.

"Hath not thy magic failed utterly against the demons of flaming voices?"

"Wao," assented Yarazoo reluctantly as if not yet quite convinced.

"Knowest thou what my magic hath told me?"

"Simanyi, munange." (I don't know, my friend.)

"My magic hath told me that my brother, Eyes-of-a-bird, awaits me not in ghost-land, but among the hills above the village of Boko."

The small eyes of the witch doctor began to grow a veil of mysticism. He did not reply.

"If through my magic these Bulamatadi are delivered into the hands of the Tiny Children of the Mountain wilt thou guide me into the mountain, the abode of my brothers?"

Birskett's steady eyes were drilling compellingly into the witch-doctor, but the latter's had become utterly lack-luster.

"Doth understand, O Yarazoo?" continued Birskett, his voice nigh trembling with rage, "that if I do not this thing for you the Tiny People of the Mountain and all that is theirs, shall become ghosts and slaves?"

Silence.

Slowly as a man coming out of a trance the small eyes awakened and looked calmly into those of the white man.

"At the hour of the parrot (about half an hour before dawn)," said Yarazoo placidly, "shall the warriors be as my friend hath asked."

"—— darn you, you ugly mutton-branded bone-head!" burst out Birskett gripping his nails into his palm, "you'd sacrifice your own silly——"

He regained control, blinking in the effort.

"Listen, my friend," he said quietly, "wherefore canst thou not do this thing for me, the brother of the Giver of Life? Am I not about to renew life again to thy tribe by delivering them from the Bulamatadi? Am I not thy friend and brother?"

For several moments Yarazoo retained his fixedly placid gaze; then said he slowly and very softly:

"Those are white words even as thou hast said, white man, my friend and brother. But dost thou not know that were that which thou demandest of me granted that for ever afterwards would the virtue of the Giver of Life be gone out? Thus is it."

"So be it, my friend!" returned Birskett resignedly and added after a moment's reflection:

"But if I do this thing for thee, thou shalt not harm the Bulamatadi, but let them loose to return alone whence they came, or else surely will their brothers return to avenge them, aye, and leave not one of you alive. Thou hast heard?"

"Pulide, munange!"

Birskett growled disgustedly when Yarazoo had gone, throwing himself on to the pallet of grass.

XXII

THE clouds, unusually low over the mountains in the setting sun, seemed to reach out ghostly scarlet fingers plucking at the bamboo forest. The stars overhead struggled out. The clammy air was thick with heat; even the insects fluttered and crawled around the lights as if limp with fatigue.

From the dull circles of yellow, blotched with figures, rose the continuous hum of a camp of men engaged at food, above which sounded at regular intervals the unceasing hoot of an African nightjar, the shrilling of numerous crickets, and from a short distance the rhythmic chorus of frogs.

In the white men's quarters in the center of the camp was a separate mess-tent within which, sprawled around a table inside a large mosquito-net, were the *chef du poste* and Verhaeren at dinner. The former with a gold-laced tunic and shirt wide open exposing a wet, hairy chest, was slumped forward with an elbow on the table. He ate gloomily.

Verhaeren, primly sitting up, ate mincingly, regarding from time to time the gross table manners of his chief, which never failed to irritate him. A gin-bottle stood between them.

"You are sure that little good man has

the sickness?" growled Strindhorst between noisy sups.

"*Si, si,*" said the little doctor. "He has a temperature of forty-two point two as well as the rash on his body."

"*Diable!*" complained Strindhorst. "Maybe I've got it myself. *Nom de* ——! Verhaeren!" he added loudly as if he feared the little man had gone suddenly deaf. "D'you think I have?"

"Who knows?" retorted Verhaeren, experiencing much pleasure in the glare of fright in the blue eyes.

"——! If I have then thou hast!"

"*Mais, non,*" expostulated Verhaeren not liking the insinuation. "You have more blood than I, *mon capitan.* These pests love the red blood, but for me I am skinny, yes. No, I will not have it."

"Don't be sure, *mon vieux,* if I have it I don't see why you shouldn't. *Diable!* Why was I so foolish as to listen to your fool's tales? *Peste,* I don't think you know anything about it any more than I do."

He mumbled unintelligibly to himself and pushed his plate away as if the idea had put him off his food.

"How many of the men did you say?"

"Eleven—as yet—but," added Verhaeren "the microbe, you must know, takes days or weeks to develop."

"*Sainte* ——!" muttered Strindhorst. "I tell you, if you can't find these —— books—I don't believe there ever were any—in two days, we go. I strike camp the day after tomorrow. *Morte de* ——, I am not paid to live in a filthy hole like this with death flying at me! And this pig, how long will he last?"

"Oh perhaps six months—perhaps six weeks. Who can tell?" said Verhaeren and continued watching the big man's eyes with cunning pleasure. "You will have frightful headaches—insupportable! Pains in the shoulders—excruciating! Sickness of the stomach—frightful! Then after the fever you will become thin slowly, lose your paunch and forget to eat. Then you——"

"*Sacré* ——! *Tais-toi, imbécile!*" roared Strindhorst, banging his fist on the table and pushing back his chair so violently that he nearly capsized. "——, I'd sooner be cut to pieces by these black devils than go through all that."

"You are afraid?" inquired Verhaeren softly.

"*Zut!*" snorted the Chef du Poste. "It is disgusting! *Pouf!* It is no death for a man!"

He grabbed angrily at a box of cheroots on the table and stuck one savagely in his beard.

"But this German ought to tell where the dirty books are now? Surely he'd find the secret if he could to save himself? *Diable!*" he cried. "We never thought of that! But if we could find the American hound couldn't you make him have the filthy disease. Then, *mon vieux,* he'd render all he knew, I'll swear."

He laughed deeply at the bright idea.

"Easily," returned Verhaeren. "I have already thought of that."

"Pah!" Strindhorst scoffed, pouring out a stiff glass of gin. "Why didn't you try it on this other brute then?"

"Because I suspected that he had already got it just as that creature had whom we sent away."

"Again I listened to your idiocy," growled Strindhorst, "and lost my men! Do you think, *mon vieux,* that trained askaris grow on palm trees here?"

He sprawled backwards and mopped his sweating face with a vast handkerchief, and Verhaeren finished his glass.

"*Pouf!*" snapped Verhaeren shrugging his shoulders as he got up. "What is the use to talk to you? Always it is I that am wrong. Always it is you who have the wisdom of *M'sieu'* Solomon."

"*Ta gueule!*" growled Strindhorst. "If your tongue was as long as your cheek you would be a rare fellow!"

"*Zut!*" spat Verhaeren from the curtain-edge looking like a spiteful terrier snapping with bared teeth. "What would you do, my great man, if I were not here to help you? You would have been food for ants long since but for me— *Oui, moi, nom de* —— and my medicines!"

"*Toi!* You lazy little kind of dirt, keep your rat-mouth still or I'll break your face for you one of these days."

He began a commotion in his chair as if to rise.

"I'll teach you to respect your superiors, pig!"

"*Tonnerre!*" screamed Verhaeren from the door. "You, my fine man, you shall die of the sleeping death which has gotten you! *Si, si!* it is the truth I tell you!"

As the big man emitted a cross between

a grunt and a groan Verhaeren disappeared into the night, chuckling audibly. Strindhorst sank back into the chair swearing and sweating profusely. He poured out another big swig and gulped it. For several moments his heavy breathing panted above the night sounds.

"Bah!" he said aloud resentfully. "The little rat doesn't know any thing about it— But——!"

WITH another smothered curse he climbed out of his chair and shouted childish threats at Verhaeren as he walked off to go the rounds of the sentries, which he was compelled to do personally now that Villino had gone. Having vented some of his spleen on the askaris he returned to his own tent.

Thus it went every night. Deprived of swaggering his authority over the eleven whites in Matanda and worked upon by greed and fear, he was growing more irritable every day; particularly under the perpetual sting of the malicious Verhaeren, whom he dared not injure or send back in case he himself should fall ill!

Kicking off his boots and flinging his belt and clothes into a chair Strindhorst crawled under his mosquito-net into bed and bawled for the servant to bring him smokes and drink.

The fever had left Friedlander and he was sitting up in his own tent taking some broth when Verhaeren, whose services he had refused, entered.

"*Ca va mieux?*" (How goes it?) asked Verhaeren suavely.

"No thanks to you!" snapped Friedlander, who was furious at his captivity, and angry at the failure of all his menaces of what the Imperial German Government would do.

"I am as you have said not a servant as you are, *m'sieu'*," returned Verhaeren humbly, sitting down, "but could *m'sieu'*, if necessary, inoculate a man with the trypanosomiasis, yes?"

"Certainly, but why? Do you wish to murder your chief or what?"

"*Ah! Non, m'sieu'*," returned Verhaeren raising a horrified hand. "But supposing we can find this Dr. Keerkton and you will be so kind as to give him the disease he will then tell us all he can to find those invaluable note books or anything else to save himself. I am so sure that he does know much. Think of it, *m'sieu'!*"

Friedlander's slit eyes narrowed the more.

"Hah, but you have not got him yet, my little man!"

"Yes, yes but if we do! What d'you think, *m'sieu'?*"

"I think," retorted Friedlander, "that you're a pretty pair of Apaches, and I don't much care what you do, for I believe I've contracted the disease myself. Still it would be some consolation if that cursed thief of an American had it. That would revenge Lörtzer too. That's true."

"But, yes, he certainly deserves it. But you, *m'sieu'*, you can not have it. Ah no!"

"What d'you think! Both of you have it or will before you get out of this —— country."

"May I assist, *m'sieu'*, for anything?" inquired Verhaeren suavely.

"Get out and leave me alone," snarled Friedlander, with a spurt of violent temper.

"*Oui, oui, m'sieu'*," returned Verhaeren.

"But I will tell the *chef* in the morning. *Bonne nuit— Nom de ——!*" he mumbled to himself as he went to his tent. "If I should have— *Oh! —— non*, not that! I can not have. Yes, it is impossible. But that pig——"

The noises of the camp faded and the fires grew to embers gleaming dull red on the stacked Sniders in the street of grass huts of the askaris. From the porters' quarters came the mutter of subdued grumbles and an occasional clink of the light chain which bound them together.

The night grew hotter and more clammy. The mosquitoes hovered like a cloud around the dim glow of the inverted "Vs" of the white men's tents. Monotonously the nightjar hooted against the throb of the distant frogs. The mountain mist blotted the stars overhead. By the machine-guns at each end of the camp the chained crews sprawled on their bellies on their blankets the better to protect their faces from the mosquitoes and crawling bugs.

THE four sentries gradually ceased their automatic, stiff-kneed march up and down. First one and then another sank to his haunches. Savages, as they called all other blacks save askaris, never attacked at night; spirits were much better sentries than they, so why should they bother when the night was so hot and all human creatures were made to sleep?

The big fellow on the northern end could,

from his position almost on the ground, have seen against the farther stars the spear points of a clump of elephant grass move ever so slightly, although there was not a breath of breeze, and then remain motionless for perhaps five minutes.

Half an hour afterwards across the trodden grass of that sentry's path glided a curious green beast of no known specie of animal. Presently between two huts in the farthest glow of the embers of a fire some thirty feet away, was a mass of wild banana fronds like a refuse pile. Later the pile had grown—or had the fire-light increased?

Nearly an hour afterwards the pile was lying half in the glow of the lantern and half in the shadow of one of the tents.

From under that tent wall at the back of Strindhorst's bed rose a tall, bearded, and naked, white man, holding in one hand a native knife.

For a moment he regarded the large recumbent form of the *chef du poste,* one hand thrown out against the net to feed a bevy of mosquitoes, and the whole of a hairy leg lying straight above. Then sticking the blade between his teeth the intruder slipped around the tent and noiselessly let fall the flap. Back he came on bare toes and from behind the head began very slowly to work out the tucked-in net and raise it. Just as he had finished, the sleeper choked in his sleep, turned over on his back and began to snore.

When that job was accomplished he bent over the chair, buckled the revolver belt around his nude waist—in case of urgent flight—and selected a sock and the scabbard cord.

Strindhorst sleepily became aware of the prick of something sharp in the side. He stirred, winced, and moved slightly. Again came the prick. The *chef du poste* awakened, and heared a voice saying in a whisper—

"*Ne bouge pas!*" (Don't move!) and then he saw the bearded face of the man whom his askaris had left for dead in the forest.

The prick increased. The combination deprived him of breath. Then a realization that the prick was a knife right over his heart persuaded him to obey.

His own sock was jammed not too lightly into Strindhorst's mouth and bound with the scabbard-cord far from gently. Feet and hands were also trussed, and a low voice offered him the choice of lying motionless and silent or answering for his sins to whatever god he fancied.

Birskett's next move was to take a needed drink, then to get into the full uniform of the *chef du poste*; rather tight around the chest and short in the arms and legs, not forgetting the boots which were usable although a bit large.

The sounds of a subdued military bark reached him and the jingle of accouterments—the guard changing. The time according to the captive's watch was 4 A. M. Sitting in the chair with the revolver on the table beside a drink and many cheroots—he stuffed the box into his pocket too—he prepared to pass the hours in comfort. Several times Strindhorst, who was probably becoming more indignant and more scared, seemed about to choke, but a suggestive prick with the knife cured him rapidly.

At last when the hands of the watch pointed to five-forty Birskett rose, tightened up Strindhorst's gag and lashed him to the bed. Then with a grin he took the pillow, which he buttoned inside the tunic to make a realistic paunch and putting on the helmet well over his face, stepped outside.

HE STOOD listening to the murmurs and after a sharp glance around the camp fixed his eyes upon the mountain tops. A bright star snuggled between two peaks began to lose its glitter. A long way off a jackal was yapping irritably. The nightjar had ceased. He heard the mumble of a sentry speaking to another, they as usual for the sake of their own hides, being most alert at the coming of dawn.

The star had dimmed, and the outline of the peaks was creamy. Loosening the revolver belt which annoyed him by being strapped continental fashion tight to the waist, he peeped inside the tent to see that the prisoner was behaving himself, and then wheeling so that his back was to the lantern and the dawn, bawled gruffly, slurring the words—

"*R-rrrrnt-m-j-orrr!*"

A slight commotion in an adjacent hut answered him. He repeated the noise angrily and elicited a gulped:

"*Bwana! Bwana!*"

The big black, jingling side-arms, stalked up through the gloom.

"Bring the gun crews here, quick! *Upesi!*" Birskett snarled gruffly.

"*Bwana!*" gasped the sergeant major, "I am to unchain them?"

"Do I speak in the wind, dog? *Upesi!*"

For a moment the man stared mystified at the blond beard beneath the helmet, puzzled by the unusual order; but as he dared not disobey the *chef du poste* he departed at a run. Birskett stood watching the adulteration of the night by the slow dawn. As soon as he heard the sergeant major releasing the second machine-gun crew he bawled at a man emerging from his hut.

"You beast! Call the men here instantly. Every man! Don't wait for your guns. *Upesi*, brute, or I'll cut your hide off!"

The black corporal was startled, but, afraid of the temper of the commandant, he rushed wildly from hut to hut ordering the askaris out and driving them towards the tents. The supposed *chef du poste* glanced again at the filtering dawn and gave vent to the prolonged howl of a hyena.

The converging parties of askaris and the gun crews involuntarily stopped at this strange demonstration superstitiously thinking that their chief had been seized by a devil. In the ensuing moment of silence came a slithering ripple like a sweeping rainstorm. A hysterical voice rang out—

"The savages come!"

The askaris stood, frightened now of they knew not what, waiting for orders. None came. The *chef du poste* backed slowly behind the tent.

The next instant a screech accompanied the thunder of feet upon earth and half a thousand spears flashed in the milky light. Most of the men paused, still automatically listening for orders; others ran helter skelter for their arms. The next instant the Tiny Children of the Mountain were upon them, howling like sirens.

Among the foremost of the warriors was one on whose wrist gleamed a broken watch. Birskett attracted his attention. As the black leaped at the uniform of the hated Bulamatadi, spear upraised, Birskett swept off his hat.

Zano recognizing him, pulled up, and was about to swing away into the general massacre. But Birskett sprang, caught him by the arm and literally dragged him into the nearest tall grass; then putting the revolver to his head he bade him march. Stupified and scared by the revolver, the meaning of which he well knew now, Zano obeyed.

XXIII

THE sun was westering deep when Birskett, with Zano in the lead, sullenly frightened, toiled through the region of the tree-lobelias. The mist was that afternoon higher than when Doctor Kirkton had passed, and these two had come by a quicker and easier route known to the apostle of the Giver of Life, so that scarcely half an hour later he stopped to point upwards where Birskett saw a red glow as of a window.

"Thank God!" he murmured. "The doc's all right and with a mighty good fire going too!"

Yet as they passed over a boggy plateau, skirted with brambles in flower, the light went out.

"Funny," thought Birskett, "he must have—" Then glancing behind he perceived that the sun had set. The light had been but the reflection of the sun.

"*Mangu! Mangu, Zano!*" he urged on the man. "We shall be eaten by the night."

But Zano, trembling still at the horror of invading the sanctity of the holy ground, needed no encouragement to speed; indeed, unable to turn and bolt for the double dread of revolver and the long way that was troubled with evil spirits, he broke into such a pace that Birskett was soon forced to clutch his arm lest some crazy impulse seize the fellow, or that he might lose sight of him in the swiftly gathering darkness which rolled from the Congo hills like a fog across the Golden Gate.

But Zano, who would rather have been blown to pieces outright than have passed the night upon the mountain, and from fear of the cold, did not miss the trail. So at length they came to a dim form which sent a clutch at Birskett's heart. As Zano was whimpering and fumbling apparently at the door the white man heard a deep bass grunt of Zapoko, the Sudanese.

With a smothered glad oath and the cry of, "Doc, old boy!" Birskett pushed past Zano and into the hut.

He could distinguish only the dull glow of a fire silhouetting a huddled, shapeless form.

"Doc, man!" he cried again.

But there was no reply from the doctor. The huddled figure by the fire stirred and a bass voice murmured again.

"Zapoko!" exclaimed Birskett sharply, angered, he hardly knew why. "*Mwami yagenda?*" (The master is away?)

"*Neda, mwami,*" drawled the deep voice languidly. "He is here."

"——, where? Why doesn't he answer? *Kufa?*" (He is dead?) Birskett added softly, fears crowding thick upon him.

"*Neda, mwami,*" returned Zapoko indifferently. "*Afude. Alwade mongota.*" (He is nearly dead. He has the sleeping sickness)

"Oh, my God!"

Birskett stood paralyzed for the moment. Then he burst suddenly into a rage.

"Get up, you lousy brute!" he cried at the Sudanese. "Where is he? Why don't you get a light you idiot son of no parents! *Mangu,* fool!"

But the complacent figure by the fire scarcely moved.

"What is the use, *mwami?*" he muttered indolently. "I am sick, too."

"Where are Matana and Kubi?"

"I don't know. Oh, Matana is dead."

"Good God!" exclaimed Birskett, as shocked as a man emerging from the morgue and seeing a dead sparrow. "Good God!"

He had figuratively to kick himself into action, for the crash of his dearest hopes had half-stunned him. His eye caught a large bundle of faggots, branches of lobelia, in a corner. He snatched a double handful and threw them on the fire. In the blaze he saw a camp bed and on it the gleam of a pallid outline of a face beneath a stubble of fair beard.

"Doc! Doc, man!" He was bending over the still form, shaking it. "Doc, don't you know me?"

The eyes opened in their deep sockets and stared at him blankly.

"Oh my God! Too late!"

He shook Kirkton tentatively once more and then as if crushed, stood back trying to think. A movement of Zano crouching over the warm blaze brought back his sense of action. He strode over to the half-somnolent Sudanese.

"*Mpa candelli!*" (Give me some candles!) he commanded.

"*Neba.*" (There are none)

"——!"

Birskett swore peevishly in his violent irritation. He was strung up to the point of breaking nerves. Then by an effort, comprehending things more in their proportion to reality he bade Zano make up the fire. In the glare he examined the doctor again. He turned away feeling sick at the glimpse of the sunken features and the terrible emaciation of the doctor's shoulders.

Depressed, forgetful of food, of which he had not tasted since the previous day, he crouched down over the fire.

The wind began to moan and somewhere afar off some animal was howling a deathly dirge. Every sigh in his overstrained imagination hinted at the death of his friend. Twice he got up and tried to look for medicines with a torch, but the whole place was a wild jumble of things. He came across Kubi lying wrapped in blankets in a corner seemingly as far gone as the doctor.

What his thoughts were that night he could scarcely ever recall—flashes of impotent anger at the stupidity of these superstitious savages, violent denunciations of those perfidious Belgians, furious curses at Lörtzer and all his kidney.

If he slept at all he only dozed, waking with anxious starts. But as death comes so at last came the trickle of dawn. Gradually, like a developing negative, the interior of the hut grew out of the darkness.

On the southern wall the morning crept through a talc window taken from a tent, gleaming on a microscope on a rough table littered with other instruments, glass slides and papers. Along another side were several metal uniform cases marked with the initials M. S. evidently Manfred Stoutt's. Kubi was crouched beside these.

On the other side of the hut lay Kirkton and in the cold pallid light he indeed seemed to have the ashen gray color of a corpse. But he stirred slightly when Birskett tried again to arouse him and opened his eyes. This time recognition glimmered, but apparently his mind could not react enough to be surprized.

"D'you know me, doc?" said Birskett.

"Water," whispered Kirkton.

Zano who had recovered a little of his normal state brought a cup at Birskett's command. The doctor half-raised himself, took three or four swallows, and then fell back again.

"Doc," persisted Birskett seeing that he was dropping into a coma again, "did you find anything—the cure?"

BUT it was too late. The sick man merely stared at him blankly and dozed. Birskett turned abruptly and searched for the hypodermic syringe and the case of ampules. Then after sterilizing the needle he gave the doctor an intravenous injection.

The powerful drug almost immediately began to have an effect. Within a few minutes the doctor was not only fairly awake, but his mind was beginning to run in spurts and starts. He stared bewilderedly at Birskett and said slowly, putting a hand to his head in a puzzled way:

"But you, Birskett? Oh, I recollect. The note. What happened?"

"Oh, never mind that for the moment, doc," said Birskett. "Too long a yarn. But tell me, have you found the cure?"

"Cure? What— Oh yes, of course."

"What! You *have* found it?

"Yes, I found it."

"Yes. But why don't you—I mean," hastily and fearfully. "What is it?"

"Eh? Oh, I don't know. That is I—" Again he pawed at his eyes and scowled in the effort to keep his brain going. "Oh, yes. They were there—the bodies I mean. Glacier had partially slid over them—almost perfect preservation. But no trypanosomes. Perfect cure. But— How did you get here, Birskett, d'you say?"

"Never mind, doc. What did you find? The cure?"

"No. Yes." He paused and stared fretfully at Birskett as if protesting at being baited.

"Yes, what?"

"Oh, a drug—unknown. Can't possibly find any trace— Unknown I tell you, man."

"What d'you mean exactly. Unknown to the pharmacopœia!"

"Impossible to recognize any of the properties and—oh, I don't know."

He turned his head wearily. Birskett stood staring, trying to fathom what the doctor had really meant. Zano moving recalled him. He demanded of Zapoko what he had been feeding the doctor with. The Sudanese lethargically pointed out a calabash in which Birskett found some canned meat stew. He warmed it slightly and gave some to Kirkton who was lying sidewise, watching him with a stupidly puzzled look. However he ate some, but not very much. Birskett attempted once more to gather information, but the brain was slowing down again rapidly. Presently he was semi-comatose.

Birskett took some food himself, threshing his mind to decide what he should do. He realized that the doctor had found traces in Stoutt's blood of some unknown and unclassified drug. He looked despairingly at the recumbent figure on the bed.

In a frenzy of emotion he got up, went outside and fell to pacing up and down. He felt he couldn't think and he didn't know where to begin if he could. The doctor was doomed! He had to sit and watch him die.

The only thing he could do was to discover what he had done with his experimental blood tests and take them back to New York in the hope that some other scientist might solve the problem. Yet if Kirkton, who was a specialist, could not identify the drug, how should another?

It was terrible that the doctor should pass out now with the cure in his hands and be unable to aid himself. He glanced to the west at the rolling ocean of the Ituri forests and, in a passion of rage, shook his fist.

That cursed idiot of a Yarazoo *must* know the secret. Would nothing overcome his superstitions? Stoutt must have given him a supply. Lord! Why the only chance to save Kirkton was to carry him down. He'd have to frighten Yarazoo into giving him of the medicine Stoutt had given them? But that wouldn't identify the drug though!

He set Zano to work immediately to make a litter with the aid of the bamboo poles of which the hut was constructed. The doctor was still in a coma. Birskett began hunting about the work-table hoping to recognize something. There were many test tubes, ampules, and slides having some dark stains that were evidently the results of the doc's experiments. He would have to take them all.

He turned his attention to searching for a small case to pack them in and opened one of Stoutt's which was full of presses containing botanical specimens. Another, about the size required, he found, was full of the same dried purple and vermilion-streaked fungi that Yarazoo wore on his head.

Funny! What on earth did Stoutt want with such a quantity? Suddenly he shouted to Zano to make up the dying fire, grabbed an empty calabash and flung in a double handful of the herb.

"Of all the blind, mutton-brained boneheads I'm the prize specimen on earth!" he muttered to himself as if it were an incantation as he set the concoction on the fire to stew. "I'll sure have to get the doc to have me put away or find me a nurse!"

The sight of that dried fungus had linked up a sequence of isolated facts: Stoutt would not have collected such a quantity without a reason; the same fungus was the headdress of Yarazoo the witch-doctor; he himself *had* been ill with all the symptoms of trypanosomiasis which he had tried strenuously to ignore, and yet had recovered while in the hands of the pigmies who habitually ate that same fungus, and who, although living amid the tsetse fly, never suffered from sleeping sickness.

The unclassified drug? Why the sum was as easy as two and two! And that darned son-of-a-gun Yarazoo had been wearing, as very naturally, a symbol of his witch-doctorship, right under their noses the whole time what all of them had been looking for!

EPILOG

THREE weeks later Doctor Kirkton was seated before Stoutt's little table lighted by the talc window, at work upon a specimen of his own blood. Although his shaven face was still emaciated he no longer resembled an animated corpse. In spite of his rapid convalescence, he had, from the beginning, remained sceptical; for there might be other reasons for his recovery than the purple and scarlet fungus; as a scientist he could not accept the theory until he had proven the fact.

As Kubi squatted over the blazing fire, cooking, Zapoko entered, bearing a load of tree-lobelia trunks. Without, Birskett, shaven too, and still clad in his Belgian whites but with the gaudy trimmings torn off, paced in the bracing air and westering sun, smoking.

The doctor on arrival had found plenty of canned goods and blankets as well as a first class scientific equipment. The remains of poor Stoutt were already packed in one of his air-tight, steel, uniform cases, the best they could do until Entebbe was reached.

They planned to leave on the morrow. Their safari, long since despatched to Uganda, they hoped to encounter on the back trail, now that Friedlander's influence was stilled.

Judiciously Birskett had not inquired of the fate of the Belgians, but he could guess; and he regretted nothing save that the tribe would some time perhaps have to pay a bitter price for a just revenge, but then, the ordinary treatment by the Bulamatadi would not be much worse.

As Birskett paused to stare at the sinking sun turning the Ituri forest into a sea of blood, he grinned at the recollection of the pigmy chief, Kikkik.

"Darned if I wouldn't like to shake the little man by the hand," he mused. "By Jingo, he should have a society's gold medal or something! Maybe the doc and I'll come back and look him up one of these days. He's surely got a heap more secrets as well, but he surely hasn't the faintest notion of their effects—eats the stuff just as the gorillas and possibly buffalo and wild buck do—because it tastes good and his people always have! Old man Yarazoo reckons it was Stoutt's magic, not the herb, that cures. He'd think that if he had told us the secret the magic would be ruined and therefore the fungus would be rendered useless. Self-preservation, I guess."

"But the old wizard might have treated us both," he reflected, flinging away the stub of one of the excellent cigars Stoutt had packed, "yet as a matter of fact we never asked him and we were all pretty busy with the Belgian bunch then. Friend Zano's solicitations for our white man's food of goat and eggs probably deprived us of the fungus remedy, which they eat all the time with their banana-mess as the pigmies do. Oh, well we've got it now I guess if——"

He wheeled eagerly and strode for the cabin in answer to a hail.

"Well?"

The doctor was sitting half-turned at his table, the sunset glow upon his face. The eyes were glistening bright and the rock-like, pale lips were parted in a half-smile.

"Not a trace of a trypanosome!" he announced triumphantly. "An absolutely perfect cure!"

Denny

by Frank C. Robertson

Author of "That Finer Fiber," "Silver Zone," etc.

HIS bulging, muscular jaws and long, powerful limbs came from Great Dane ancestors; a strain of terrier from somewhere on his mother's side contributed a funny, fuzzy face and a surplus of hair; but it was the shepherd blood in him which gave him his acute, sensitive intelligence. All breeds were merged in him into just plain sheep-dog.

Denny's first recollection was of dreamy days spent loafing on a horse-blanket under a sheep-wagon; the purple passages being when his shepherd mother occasionally sneaked away from the herd to give him nourishment.

Then, too, the monotony of life was broken every three or four days when the camp-mover would bundle him up, horse-blanket and all, and stuff him into a tub on the boot behind the wagon. Then followed a rough ride to the next bed-ground which almost jolted the life out of him.

Before he was old enough to go with the herd, his mother and the herder, the outfit went into Winter quarters on the owner's ranch, and Denny, ganging up with half a dozen other pups, became an abomination as they hilariously chased loose stock and passing teams without rime or reason.

Spring came, and good sheep-dogs were found to be at a premium. Many herders had to go out with only a green pup. Thus it happened that Denny one day found one end of an unchewable wire attached to his collar and the other end of the wire in the hands of Bill Peterson, a herder.

At first Denny objected strenuously. Being a gangster and a rough-neck on the ranch was much more exciting than a humdrum existence in the hills. But Bill had a way with dogs, and Denny possessed quick adaptability. In a week Bill was Denny's god, and he was able to eliminate the wire.

Denny's training began immediately. Bill was a big, quiet fellow whose every speech and action meant business—and Denny quickly found it out.

"Git 'way round 'em, Denny," Bill ordered with a suggestive wave of the hand in the direction in which he wished the dog to go.

"With a *whoof* of delight Denny went after the sheep—straight into the middle of the herd. The sheep scattered in all directions, and Denny joyfully grabbed the closest one. The next moment a rock landed in his ribs—not hard enough to do him any permanent injury; but it knocked the breath out of him and bowled him over.

"Come back here," Bill ordered without anger as soon as the pup got to his feet.

That was lesson No. One. Bill had never read a word about dog training—didn't know, in fact, that there was any science attached to it. But his method did the business.

Finally Denny grasped the fact that he must stay on the outside of the herd. On his first attempt after realizing that he went clear around them as if he were shot out of a gun; nor did he stop until the sheep were wadded into a compact ball of wool, which heaved and squirmed like a pile of maggots as the sheep piled over each other.

"Denny," copyrighted 1922 by Frank C. Robertson

Still he went round and round, too excited to hear the herder's commands to stop. Again the rock landed in his ribs. Lesson No. Two.

He soon learned to go when told, and to stop when told. Then he learned to watch Bill's arm for the direction in which to go, and finally how far to go by the length of the gesture. Bill soon omitted the arm motion and even speech; signifying his wishes by movements of his head.

Denny learned that upon first being sent around the herd he was to lope a rod or so away from the leaders and make no sound. Usually this was sufficient to turn the leaders gently back in another direction. But if a sharp turning was necessary the second time the dog sped like a bullet, sounding his war-whoop and knocking over any laggard that chanced to get in his way. That was what Bill called "warmin' 'em up." Denny was a past-master at it.

Soon Denny began to understand the philosophy of herding, and his movements were largely automatic. Yet he knew instinctively what to do without being told by Bill.

At noon Bill would leave him with the herd while he went to camp for lunch. The herd was always in good control when Bill returned—always with Denny's dinner.

The Summer passed, and Denny became a master sheep-dog. That Winter Bill had to care for several bunches of bucks which were kept in the bunch pens in the lambing-sheds on the ranch. Each bunch had to be driven out to grain and water separately through a series of alleys to the main corral, where were the feed and water troughs. Within a week Denny knew exactly what to do with each bunch. Bill opened the gates and Denny did the rest.

But Denny was glad when Spring came and he and Bill were back on the range. Sheep-herders are said to shun society, but the most melancholy of them are gluttons for sociability compared to the average sheep-dog. Denny was now seventy-five pounds of bone and sinew, and he cared for only two things—Bill Peterson and the herd.

Life was a thing of joy these days for Denny. Following the herd with Bill morning and evening, lazing around in the shade of the fragrant pines during the middle of the day and barking good-natured defiance at the yelling coyotes by night, life slipped by like one long, golden dream.

He lived well—Bill saw to that. Denny's sour-dough biscuits were never stale or soggy, and the mutton gravy on them was always warm. Then too there was an occasional fried egg, and always the mutton bones. Denny was the *ne plus ultra* of contentment.

They summered on the extreme eastern slope of the Caribou Range; in a rough, timber-covered, cañon-gashed region where the only means of transportation were pack-mules, and these were limited strictly to a few well-defined pack-trails. But the feed was good and the herd was rolling in fat long before shipping-time.

The range was so exceedingly good and the days so extremely pleasant in fact that Bill hesitated long before leaving it. He knew that it had been a hot, dry Summer, and that the grass on the flats and foot-hills had been shriveled up. Dave Shannon, the owner, had written advising him to stay as long as he could; therefore he clung to the mountains long after the other herds had departed.

Indeed it was late in October before Bill told his camp-mover to get ready to pull out. The thing which warned him that he had perhaps stayed too long was the grim, gray clouds, heavy and threatening, which squatted upon the mountain tops like bloated heathen idols.

The morning they were to start a sort of mist saturated the air and permeated the men's clothing. Even Denny felt it through his mat of thick hair and shivered.

"I reckon me an' Denny'll have to camp out with the herd to-night," Bill told the camp-mover. "If we drive the herd back the way you'll have to go with the camp outfit it'll take us four or five days, but if we take the herd on up to the top of old Baldy and down the north end we'll be able to meet you on McCoy Creek tomorrow night. I'll wrap up a little grub in a pair of blankets an' we'll be all right for one night."

"It'll save a lot of time if you don't mind sleepin' out," the camp-mover agreed.

Denny wagged his tail to show that he too was willing.

Bill made up a light pack and slung it on his back. It was rather unwieldy to climb a mountain with, but Bill was used to walking, and there would be plenty of chances to rest while Denny was urging the slow-moving herd along.

They started the herd up the top of a

long back-bone which ran down from the very summit of old Baldy. Once this ridge had been covered with timber, but in the not far distant past a forest fire had devastated that part of the mountain. Now dense masses of fallen timber blocked their passage continually, and made it totally impassable for mules and horses.

The sure-footed sheep, urged on by Denny, crawled under or over each obstruction like sand sifting through a gravel sieve. Bill, with his pack on his back, took the shortest possible route; often being compelled to crawl along the smooth surface of a fallen tree to get over some particular thick obstruction. Denny trotted gravely from edge to edge of the herd, keeping them ever going upward by turning the flanks inward and nipping the stragglers.

"We're goin' to sleep cold in our one pair of blankets if this damp keeps up," Bill told the dog once as Denny trotted by.

Denny showed his teeth in a grin as much as to say that it was nothing for he-fellows to endure.

At last it seemed that they were actually in the clouds. A fog so thick that it could almost be cut with a knife was upon them. It was impossible to see more than a rod in advance, and Bill was compelled to rely upon Denny to get the herd along.

The dog sensed his added responsibility, for he began to bark. Before he had worked silently, for the mere sight of him was sufficient to send them scurrying out of his way. Now that only a few of them at a time could see him he had to make himself heard.

Bill grinned in appreciation of the dog's acumen. He looked at his watch and found that it was past noon; then he whistled to Denny and they had lunch together.

"Push 'em boy; keep 'em movin'," Bill said when they had finished eating.

Denny wagged his tail, gave a short, snappy bark to show that he understood and plunged into the fog.

Up and up the dog worked the reluctant herd, so engrossed in the arduous task that for a time he forgot his master. The fog blotted out the outline of the mountain; and Denny was vaguely puzzled when he discovered that the herd was no longer going up-hill, but was lining out horizontally on the side of a ridge. He knew they had not changed directions on him, so they must have reached the summit and, true to sheep nature, were refusing to go down-hill if they could possibly travel on a level.

As a matter of fact the herd had reached the summit of old Baldy in a low place and had gone on around the other side following old sheep-trails which led to the south.

Denny grew more and more perplexed. He knew the herd should be headed, but he did not know in which direction they should go. He stopped and waited anxiously for Bill's instructing whistle, but no sound came. He trotted anxiously from flank to flank of the herd with every acute sense on the alert to find Bill—but Bill was not there.

The dog stopped and whiffed anxiously at the air; but the only scent he caught was that of the herd. He lifted his voice in a loud, inquiring howl, then sat back on his haunches while he waited for Bill's answering shout. None came.

Again and again he repeated his inquiry until the howl became a wail. Eventually the terrible truth soaked into his consciousness—Bill was lost.

Denny struck out on the back trail. A drizzling rain had been falling for some time, but the heavy fog still endured. It was impossible even for the dog to tell whether he was on the right trail except by smelling of the sheep-tracks, which were still warm, though the drizzle was fast destroying these.

The dog reached the place where he and Bill had eaten their lunch. Then Denny loosed what was, indeed, a mournful howl. It was the first time he had ever been separated from his master when he did not know where to find him.

But Denny was not of the kind to give way to despondency. The master was lost; therefore he must be found.

Denny smelled around until he found Bill's tracks. They could not be traced by sight, for even Bill's heavy, hob-nailed shoes could make no impression on the rank, slippery grass. The scent was cold, yet by tremendous concentration the dog was able to follow it for some distance.

Joyfully Denny realized that Bill had been going upward—toward the herd. Yet he wondered vaguely why he had not met him, or why Bill had not replied to his eager barking.

The trail became more and more difficult to follow, especially as Bill frequently was obliged to walk along dead logs, or cross ledges of naked rock. And the drizzle was

relentlessly washing away what few signs were left.

At last Denny came to a big, fallen tamarack from which the bark had slipped, leaving the surface as slick and slippery as a peeled onion. He sniffed around it sanguinely while a low whine sounded softly from his throat. The scent there seemed to be just a mere trifle stronger than it had been before.

At last he became satisfied that Bill had walked along that log. He sprang on to it, and his feet slipped from the smooth surface. Cat-like he recovered himself in mid-air and landed on his feet. Next time he tried it more circumspectly.

As he moved along inch by inch with his sensitive nostrils close to the wood he became more doubtful. Half-way along it he lost the scent altogether. He went on to the end but he could not pick it up again. He retraced his steps to the stump, and several times he thought he had the scent; but each time he lost it before he could get away from the log.

It rained. As the worried dog smelled around and around the stump the last faint sign of Bill disappeared—and darkness, thick, clammy and black as ink, settled down. Denny acknowledged himself baffled. He sprang to the top of the stump and wailed out the sorrow and disappointment that was in him.

BILL PETERSON cursed the fog and the rain. He cursed the network of fallen logs which continuously impeded his progress, and above all else he cursed any man who was —— fool enough to herd sheep. The one consoling feature about the whole business was that he had a dog who was capable of performing all the hard labor.

It was well for Bill that he had such a dog; for, blinded by the fog and burdened by the pack, it was all he could do to keep up with the herd. The only practical way to get across the barriers of down trees was to climb over the top of them, and frequently he was compelled to retrace his steps when he found the tops of the trees in such a tangle that he could not get through. And the drizzling rain was making sure footing more and more difficult.

He plumped up against a big, fallen tamarack from which the bark had slipped, leaving the surface as slick and slippery as a peeled onion. The tip of it pointed up the mountain—the way he wanted to go. The tip was higher, much higher, than the butt. It was even possible that it was lodged; but it was also possible that the tip was lying upon other fallen trees over which he would be able to climb.

He drew himself to the top of the log and began to walk along it. The pitch became steeper and steeper. Bill peered ahead hard, trying to pierce the fog to see what he was coming to, but ten feet was the best he could do. He looked down to see what was underneath—and a foot slipped.

The herder pitched over backward, his heels in the air. The tamarack had fallen across a gully, the bottom of which was a veritable maze of small, fallen trees. Bill's head crashed onto something hard and everything turned black.

It was well for him that it did, for the fall was not yet over. His right leg shot between the forks of another down tree, but his body went on. The bone snapped midway between knee and ankle.

Half an hour later Bill regained consciousness. His head was hanging down, and there was an exruciating agony in his right leg. He reached up and caught a limb on a tree above him with both hands, and drew himself to a sitting position. After considerable pain and difficulty he succeeded in liberating the broken leg. He felt of it gingerly, and the realization that it was broken sent him into a momentary panic.

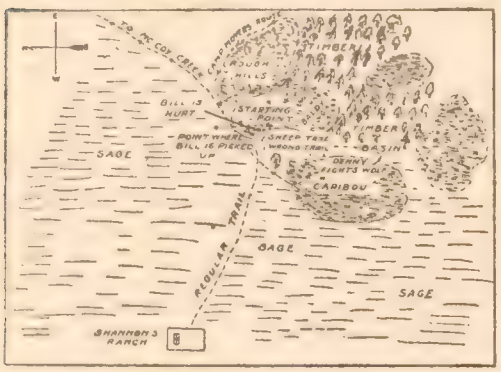
The camp-mover was miles away, so Bill realized that he was alone in the almost impenetrable fastnesses of old Baldy. It was a cinch that no man would ever find him where he was now. He must get out—must get down to McCoy Creek at the foot of old Baldy and wait for the camp-mover to come along.

Then he thought of Denny. Denny might be able to help. He whistled shrilly, but the dog did not come. For ten minutes he whistled and called, and then he was forced to admit that the dog had gone on with the herd. Bill had no idea of the length of time he had been unconscious nor consequently any idea of how far away the dog and the herd might be.

He gazed at the broken leg and saw that it was swelling rapidly. Each minute that he delayed meant that his chances for ultimately reaching McCoy Creek ahead of the camp-mover was lessened.

More than all else Bill feared delirium—feared that he would lose his head and wander about aimlessly. He began to crawl, dragging the useless limb behind him.

He had hard work to extricate himself from the tangle he was in, and then he had to crawl a hundred yards down the gully before he could get out of that. Then he circled around on the level until he judged that he was back on top of the ridge he had started from. This was comparatively easy



to calculate, but it left him considerably below the tree he had fallen off of. Here he stopped and tried to figure out his situation.

McCoy Creek was due north of him, and he must get down to it. All day the storm had been coming from the west. He had these two facts to build upon.

He estimated that McCoy Creek was about four miles away. If he could keep his left cheek wet and the right one dry he stood a chance to crawl down the end of the mountain to the pack-trail—unless the wind changed.

Again he began to crawl. The pain was maddening, and he felt that he must have something to occupy his mind. He began to calculate the distance he had traveled. He estimated that each time he brought his left knee forward he had covered twelve inches of distance. Perhaps a little more, but he would call it twelve, or sixteen knee steps to the rod. Three hundred and twenty rods was one mile—five thousand one hundred and twenty painful, heart-breaking knee steps. Four times that was twenty thousand, four hundred and eighty. Add at least two miles for necessary detours or miscalculations, and he must make thirty thousand, seven hundred and twenty knee steps, dragging that hot, throbbing, useless leg behind him before he could expect to reach the pack-trail. He began to count.

He was still counting when night came on. He could no longer see at all; but then he had not been able to see much before, except to locate the smoothest places to put down his hands and knees. His left cheek was still damp and cold, and the right one dry. He would go on.

Up and over dead, fallen logs. Up and over unsuspected ledges of rock, and down the other side while the sharp surfaces wore holes in the knees of his overalls, and through the tender skin. Then through the palms of his hands, and later the back of his knuckles as he took to using them. Through dense thickets of underbrush which tore his clothing to tatters and crimsoned his body with blood from a hundred tiny bramble wounds.

Ten thousand knee steps, and he had to rest. Five thousand more and he had to rest again. Then three thousand. Then two. One. Finally it was down to every hundred.

The surrounding blackness changed to dull gray, and he knew that it was morning. And the fog still endured. He had made exactly thirty-two thousand knee steps—or had he missed a thousand?

At any rate he should have reached the pack-trail. Could he have unwittingly crossed it—or could the wind have changed? He dared not change his course now. He must go on—carefully.

BILL PETERSON was sitting squarely in the middle of the narrow pack-trail when his camp-mover came along at four o'clock that afternoon. Bill was choking with thirst, and two hundred yards below him McCoy Creek, a veritable young river, gurgled tantalizingly. But it was out of sight of the trail, and Bill dared not risk the descent to it lest the camp-mover get by before he could get back up. His leg was swollen to twice its natural size, but he still had a grip on himself.

"My God, Bill, how fur'd you come in a fix like that?" the camp-mover exclaimed when he took in the situation.

"Seven miles, one hundred and forty-seven rods and nine feet," Bill responded.

The camp-mover was on the ground in an instant. He handed Bill a water-bag, then twisted his ax out from under the hitch

rope on one of the pack-mules and began to cut a couple of long, slender poles.

He lashed the poles to the sides of the pack-mules, leaving a space of ten feet between the tail of the lead mule and the head of the other. In this space he constructed a litter by fastening bedding to the poles. Into the litter he hoisted Bill. The camp-mover was efficient.

"But the herd," Bill objected. "The herd is somewhere up there on the top of old Baldy. We can't leave 'em there. There won't be a sheep left by the time we git somebody to come back an' look for 'em. There's two thousand head of sheep in that herd, an' they're worth twelve dollars a head. You go round 'em up, an' I'll wait here."

"You go to ——," the camp-mover replied, unmoved. "It's seventy-five miles out of these mountains, an' another fifty to the ranch, an' twenty-five more for the doctor to travel out there after they phone to him. We ain't losin' no time."

"But Denny's up there, too," Bill protested.

"—— Denny. He can take his chances with the coyotes. If he can't kill mutton enough to live on let him starve. You're goin' out of here, *pronto*."

Argument was in vain. The long, painful journey out of the mountains began. It was one long nightmare for Bill, though the camp-tender was a natural-born nurse.

After two full days' travel, besides the stub of that day, they fetched up at Dave Shannon's ranch. Bill had been out of his head for hours.

A doctor was phoned for at once, and Bill was made as comfortable as possible under the kindly care of Mrs. Shannon. Then Dave Shannon, the owner of the herd, began to make inquires regarding the sheep.

"I don't know," the camp-mover said doubtfully. "I know in a general way where Bill left the herd, but that's all. It's been more than three days now since they've had a herder, an' it'll take us all of two more days to git back up there. Sheep rambles mighty bad this time o' the year, an' the varmints are powerful bad. If we ever find any sheep up there it'll be an accident."

"I'm afraid so," Shannon agreed, stoically enough considering that the loss of that herd of sheep spelled bankruptcy for him, and its recovery financial independence. "Anyway, it can't be helped. You couldn't leave Bill up there with that broken leg. However, we'll make a search. We'll rustle all the men we can, and see if we can't find some of 'em at least."

BILL was gone. Gradually the full sense of that overwhelming calamity dawned upon Denny. Something had happened to his god, and he was crushed to earth. Blind instinct told the dog to take the back trail—to go back to where the camp had been that morning. He had actually gone fifty yards on the back trail before something stronger than instinct halted his steps.

The sheep were on trail. He had been working the herd up the mountain because Bill had told him to do that—and Bill had never told him that he was relieved. Bill had often left him with the sheep while he went to camp for something; therefore he must now intend him to stay with the herd.

Denny's tail drooped sorrowfully. Almost it seemed to him that he had disobeyed his beloved master's commands by deserting the herd to look for that master. When Bill wanted him to leave the herd he would say so.

Denny turned and retraced his steps up the mountain, though his steps were no longer springy. Something in his dog nature told him that all was not well with Bill. But his duty was plain, though unpleasant. He must remain faithful to Bill's trust in defiance of the instinct which told him to search until the master was found.

Dark and damp as it was, Denny reached the top of the mountain and picked up the trail of the herd. True to sheep nature, which is always to do the wrong thing, they had turned sharply to the south when they should have gone west or north. However, they were on the west side of the mountain, and they had been on the east side when they started.

Denny found the sheep at the bottom of a chaparral jungle so thick that they could not get through. Perforce they had bedded down where they were; it being sheep nature to go as long as the road was clear and then lie down and sulk at the first obstruction.

Denny found a flat rock above them and from that vantage point kept mournful, yet alert vigil through the night.

Morning came, and the fog still continued, though it lifted occasionally, giving a momentary view of the rugged mountainside.

At crack o' day the leaders of the herd began to move. They started upward and almost surrounded the dog before he announced his presence with his short, sharp, staccato bark of warning. Then they tumbled over each other in their haste to get out of his way. There being no other way out, they were obliged to go straight down the mountain.

Finally the tinkling of the bells told Denny that the leaders were getting far down the mountain, while some of the tail-enders were yet close to him. He knew this was not well, for Bill did not permit the herd to get too much of a scatter while on trail. And Denny sensed that they were on trail—out to where the timber ended and the sage-brush plain began. He suddenly went into action and whooped the stragglers on down.

Denny now had a purpose—to keep the herd moving; yet not so fast nor in so tight a bunch that they could not feed. From flank to flank of the herd he trotted, edging them gently in, and hurrying up the stragglers.

The leaders found a place where they could break through the chaparral and travel alongside the mountain to the south. Denny let them go for a while, but he was troubled about it. The fog foiled his efforts to get his bearings, but he was sure that the herd should be kept going downward. Finally he became certain of it, and he ran above the herd until he reached the leaders. Then he was in front of them with his menacing yelp. The leaders bent and continued downward.

Suddenly they broke through the cloud-bank into a glorious patch of sunlight. It was an inspiring scene—the heavy clouds atop old Baldy's massive dome like a mammoth wig, and below the fog and timber-line the green, red and yellow boughs and leaves of the trees blending together in a massive, varicolored carpet.

But Denny had eyes for none of this; he sought only Bill. He cast a long, anxious glance around, and conviction settled upon him that Bill was lost. He gave vent to one dismal howl of lonesomeness and followed the herd.

The herd had gone far enough to the southward before Denny turned them to get on the wrong side of a divide. So when it reached the foot of old Baldy, McCoy Creek was far to the north; and it was in a large, rolling, timber-covered region between three mountains, which was called Jack-Knife Basin. And it was far from the regular trail out of the mountains.

By noon Denny was hungry. He had always been somewhat pampered for a sheep-dog with his three good meals a day, and being violently deprived of them hurt. But he knew the herd must go on.

All day the dog kept his charges moving through the timber in a general westerly direction. Shortly before sundown the leaders came out on top of a timberless ridge.

Denny recognized a natural bed-ground, and he trotted slowly around in front of the herd and checked the leaders. He would let them feed on the ridge until it was nearly dark; then he would round them up and make them lie down. He had done that often for Bill.

He climbed to the top of a slight rise and sat down while he waited for night to come. Just as dusk began to fall some peculiar sense warned him to look down the ridge on the other side of the herd. He did so and instinctively cowered, while the hair on his neck rose in an enormous ruff. Sitting there on his haunches with a curling red tongue lolling out in a sardonic grin was a gigantic timber wolf.

With the keen perception of the wild the wolf had already sensed that the band was without a herder, so he was taking his time picking out a victim before his death charge. Had it been a mere coyote Denny would have known how to deal with him—but a wolf!

The gray marauder rose to his feet and stretched himself leisurely. The preoccupied sheep were within half a dozen rods of him, but they took no notice.

Then the wolf went into action with dynamic energy. He was within ten feet of the sheep before they noticed him. They swerved to either side in blind panic and sheep-like got in each other's road and were soon piled up three deep.

The wolf had ample time to kill a dozen; but he was particular. Before making his rush he had picked out a fat, juicy lamb, one of the largest in the herd, and he was determined to have it. Through the brush they sped, the frightened lamb making the woods ring with its terrified blattings.

Soon the wolf was close enough to make a grab, and he neatly ham-strung the lamb. Before it had time to fall the deadly fangs

were buried in its throat, and the lamb's career was over save for a few agonized kicks and wheezes.

The wolf stood over his victim and surveyed the remainder of the herd with a red grin. Apparently he was debating with himself the advisability of further killings before appeasing his hunger. Then suddenly he was bowled over and over as seventy-five pounds of righteous wrath struck him with the force of a pile-driver.

Denny was on top of the wolf in a second, his powerful jaws striving for the deadly throat hold. The long fur on the wolf's neck defied his first effort; and before he could get another hold the wolf's powerful hind legs doubled up beneath him, and as they straightened Denny was thrown four feet in the air. The wolf bounded to his feet like a rubber ball.

They feinted for an opening for a moment like cautious boxers; then the wolf was in and out like a flash of grayish light, and a small stream of blood trickled down Denny's shoulder.

The wolf came in again, and Denny rose on his hind legs to meet him. They wrestled for a moment before Denny went over backward before superior weight and strength. The wolf made a swift try for the throat hold—the only one which a wolf will hold on to—and, failing to make it, leaped away.

Now the marauder began typical wolf tactics. Slash and get away. Slash and get away. Blood flowed from Denny from a score of wounds. A few times he met the foe breast to breast; but each time he was thrown, though always he contrived to protect his throat and roll free. Staggering to his feet, he would rush the enemy, but never seemed able to inflict injury.

Denny's eyes began to grow dim and his legs wabbly; but always he bored in—no thought of defeat in his indomitable soul. Always he was on the aggressive; and gradually the wolf backed away after each dash in, until they were in the brush on the side of the ridge.

The wolf leaped in, ripped open another wound and bounced out again; but his bound back was checked by a bush. Instantly Denny was upon him. They rose on their hind legs; but this time Denny did not try to wrestle. His bulging Great-Dane jaws clamped down over the wolf's left foreleg, pulverizing the tender bones of the knee.

Under the supreme agony the wolf let out a howl which made the cowering sheep shrivel inside their skins; but Denny shut his eyes and held on. The wolf slashed, kicked, bucked, and howled as if possessed by a thousand devils; but Denny's jaws were unyielding as a vise.

From time to time Denny was forced to shift his hold slightly, and each new move marked a new point of torture to his antagonist. Finally the wolf, following a tremendous struggle in which he had yanked the dog all through the brush, went over on his back. That instant Denny loosened his hold and made a frantic grab for the throat. But the instant he moved, the great hind legs doubled under him and straightened with a powerful recoil that shot the dog ten feet into the brush.

Denny was up and on his feet as if the earth had thrown him back; ready to face the next charge. But there was none to face. Mr. Wolf had had sufficient, and was scurrying through the brush as fast as his three good legs would carry him.

Denny shook himself and felt terribly weak. He wanted to lie down and rest, but the herd was not gathered. He found that the scared sheep had bunched on the bedground; yet nevertheless he made a wide, back-tracking circle lest some foolish lamb had stayed behind before he was satisfied.

Now his hunger returned with redoubled fury. He walked over to the lamb the wolf had killed. The fresh blood assailed his nostrils maddeningly. Here was meat, and he was fearfully hungry; but—Bill had never allowed him to eat raw meat. It had been drilled into him that dead sheep were not to be eaten, even though they had been freshly killed by coyotes. Hunger and the influence of Bill's training battled within him.

In the end Denny trotted weakly to a small spring half a mile away and made his supper on a drink of water and a long breath. Then he returned to the herd and licked his wounds through the long night.

In the morning Denny tried to take his bearings. He knew that he must get the sheep out of the mountains, and he knew where they should go when they were out—to the ranch. Then, too, there was a tang in the air which told him that he must hurry—a faint, but to him sure, sign that snow was coming.

Straight ahead loomed the towering crest of Caribou Mountain. To take the herd

over the top of that was impossible. To the south of that stood another mountain scarcely less formidable.

But between the two shone a narrow, deep strip of blue sky. Straight for that gap in the mountains Denny headed his herd.

Four days later a fat band of sheep emerged on to Homer Creek Flat at the foot of the south end of Caribou. Behind them, holding them together, was a nondescript-looking dog whose ribs protruded until they could be plainly seen through the thick mat of blood-stained hair on his sides, and whose hip bones stuck up like the ears on a prickly pear.

Not for a moment during the daylight did the sheep allow Denny to rest. The moment he stopped trotting from flank to flank they would scatter or turn in the wrong direction. Nor were his nights much better. Did he lie down on one side of the band he could see the green, baleful eyes of hungry coyotes peering from the darkness on the other. With a roar he would charge and the eyes would disappear, and presently there would come an insulting yip from another direction.

The fight with the wolf had weakened him so that he knew in his heart that he was no match even for a coyote; but he allowed no hint of that weakness to appear as he bayed back defiance to the demoniacal voices which made the nights hideous with their clamor.

Had he once weakened the gray marauders would have cut the herd to pieces. But from some mysterious supply of reserve energy he drew strength to make his challenge sound confident and eager.

Five days without a mouthful to eat, sore and mangled to boot; yet a count of the herd would have shown only one sheep short from the time Bill Peterson had been injured.

Because of that short detour at the start the herd had come on to the flats fully thirty miles south of where it should have done. Behind, somewhere on old Baldy, a dozen men combed the timber while conviction settled upon them that the herd was irretrievably lost.

That night Denny bedded his charges on an old bed-ground, and here he found a few old mutton bones. Ravenously he fed upon them; grinding them to powder before swallowing. The last bone was gone all too soon, but he felt better.

In the night it snowed—only a few inches on the flats, and by mid-afternoon that had melted; but on old Baldy it dropped eighteen inches of heavy snow which would remain there for seven months.

Now Denny knew his course. He knew exactly where the ranch lay, and he hustled the herd along as fast as his sore, stiff limbs would permit. He found no more bones. Several times he sighted sheep-camps hurrying along to get off the foot-hills before Winter set in; but he dared not leave the herd to investigate them.

Also he came close to several herds—once so close that the leaders wanted to mix. Bravely Denny loped around and turned his leaders in another direction. He knew that mix-ups on the range were tabu.

From edge to edge of the herd Denny trotted bravely, turning the flanks inward and urging the stragglers on, though each step was torture to his weary legs. Weak from loss of blood and famine though he was, he trotted grimly on—from edge to edge, from flank to flank.

Nor was he unaware that the means to get relief from the gnawing inside of him and strength to go on was ever within his power. One bite at any fat lamb's throat and he would have meat. But that was the one thing he would not do. Wolves and coyotes did that—and they were enemies.

WITH his leg in a plaster cast Bill Peterson reclined beside an open window in a bedroom of Dave Shannon's house. The window faced the east. Miles away Bill could see the lofty crest of Caribou, now mantled with a blanket of snow which would not disappear for weary months.

Beyond Caribou, higher still, was old Baldy; and on old Baldy was—what? Bill's mind never ceased to speculate.

Suddenly a familiar sound fell upon Bill's ears. He raised himself on an elbow where he could get a better look, and he saw that his ears had not deceived him. He had heard the tinkling of sheep-bells, and already the leaders of the herd were in sight.

Bill's heart gave a jump as he recognized an old, mouse-colored Lincoln ewe on lead. It was his herd.

"Mrs. Shannon!" he called excitedly.

Mrs. Shannon ran into the room.

"Look! The herd! The boys have found 'em," Bill said.

"It can't be," Mrs. Shannon demurred. "Dave called up on the phone not an hour ago from Herman and said that they had given the herd up. He said if any of the sheep were alive yet they were snowed in somewhere on old Baldy."

But the herd was now in sight, so that Bill knew he could not be mistaken. And behind it a dog trotted from side to side on legs which wabbled and frequently collapsed altogether under him. Yet each time he managed someway to get up and go on—from edge to edge of the herd. From flank to flank.

From Bill Peterson's lips went a piercing whistle that caused Mrs. Shannon to scream and clap her hands to her ears. But it was a sound as from heaven itself to the worn-out dog. He stopped, and his drooping ears shot up eagerly.

"Denny! Here, Denny!" Bill almost sobbed. "Come here!"

Denny was relieved at last. Bill had come back; therefore he could go off duty. Straight toward the open window came the dog with a wabbly, yet eager, lope. In a moment he was in Bill's arms.

"Mrs. Shannon," Bill said with lips that quivered, "Denny has brought that herd in alone, more than a hundred miles, an' he's starvin'. If you ever did cook a good meal, for the love o' Mike cook one now."

"Nothing is too good for Denny," Mrs. Shannon agreed.

ROUTED 7 INDIANS WITH AN AX

by **Lewis Appleton Baker**

FULL as is the history of the border States with the courageous acts of the women of the time, it would seem that none can surpass, if, indeed, equal that of Mrs. John Merrill, of Nelson County, Kentucky, in its physical prowess or in the actual results accomplished. At this day and period it is difficult even to imagine that such a feat could have been performed by any woman, no matter how strong and hardy.

During the Summer of 1787, Mr. Merrill's cabin was attacked by seven wandering Indians. The barking of the watch-dog at midnight was the family's first knowledge of the approach of any one, and, unfortunately, Mr. Merrill, opening the door to learn what was afoot, had his thigh and arm immediately broken by rifle fire, thus placing him at the very beginning *hors de combat.* As he fell he cried out to his wife to close the door. Mrs. Merrill, the equal of any man in both strength and courage, seized the ax and dropped the bar of the door, just as several Indians appeared in view.

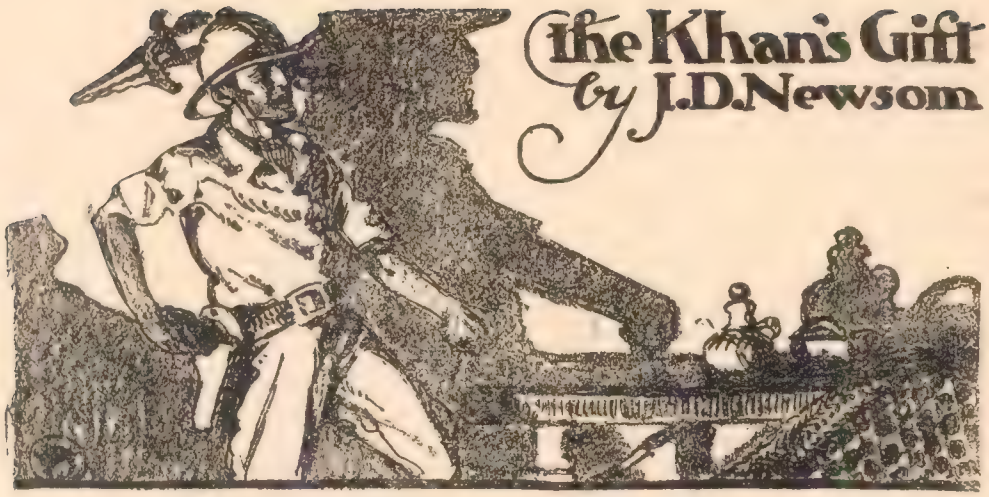
It was not long, however, before they had effected a breach and were half-way into the little room. With only the ax as a weapon this Amazonian woman killed or seriously wounded four of her assailants.

The other three, ascending to the roof, made an effort to make an entrance by means of the great chimney.

Undaunted, the lone defender, with four savages wallowing in their blood at her feet, seized her choicest possession, a feather bed, and, ripping it open, threw it upon the fire, making a blinding smoke, in which two of the remaining fiends dropped to the hearth nearly insensible. It was but the work of a moment to dispatch these two as she had the others.

One would have thought that this would have been enough for the sole survivor, but apparently, he, too, was not devoid of courage. For scarcely had she succeeded in ridding herself of those who had come down the chimney, than her attention was called to the last one, who was even then hurling himself over the threshold of the broken door. There was not even time to raise her weapon for a good blow, but just as it was in her hands, she drew the keen edge of the gory ax across the cheek of the intruder, inflicting a deep gash.

Apparently, this was too much even for him, and with one terrific yell he made for the forest, never stopping probably until he reached Chillicothe, where his account of the terrible "long knife squaw," together with his appearance, was sufficient to protect the Merrill family from assaults for the future, unless with a regiment of braves.



The Khan's Gift

by J. D. Newsom

Author of "The Avenger," "The Rain Maker," etc.

"THAT is my last word," said Najaf Khan. "I can not grant your wish."

"But I don't understand!" exclaimed Collier. "I have been here a full week and until today you led me to believe——"

"With knowledge comes wisdom," murmured Najaf Khan. "Not until last night did I receive the information which altered my intentions."

"And there is nothing I can say?"

"Only the truth, *sahib*," Najaf Khan stroked his chin and looked at Collier with kindly eyes.

The words struck Collier like a blow in the face.

"The truth! Have I lied to you then?"

"Not lied—no." Najaf Kahn slowly shook his head. "But how much have you left unsaid?"

"You mean——"

"I mean that yesterday there came a messenger from Sobrahar where Horridge sahib awaits you. Now do you understand?"

"How do you know——"

"By the very look on your face I know." Najaf Kahn said gently. "What I would not give to Horridge sahib I shall not grant to his—servant. Once he tricked me over that concession at Sobrahar, claiming that it was a matter of business and therefore just. Then he came to me again seeking the right to exploit the Chinipur land. When I refused he went away muttering abuse. And now, wanting the land badly, he sends you."

Collier flushed beneath his tan, and his eyes fell before the steady glance of the old man.

"Since your mind is made up I need wait no longer," he said at last. "I shall return to Sobrahar tomorrow."

"May you journey in peace."

Najaf Khan bowed as Collier, after the customary salutations, turned and hurried across the room. Suddenly, half-way to the door, he stopped and retraced his steps.

"Najaf Khan," he said hurriedly. "I have failed—will you believe me when I say I am pleased? From the beginning the plan displeased me, but a sense of obligation forced me to do my best for Horridge sahib."

A slow smile spread across Najaf Khan's wrinkled face.

"There is nothing to add. Now I know you speak the truth."

For long hours that evening Collier sat alone, brooding, on the veranda of the *dakh* bungalow. Across the stretch of dusty plain before him arose the walled city of Kisleh where towered the fort-like palace—the home of Najaf Khan. Day after day Collier had argued and explained, trying to secure the right to exploit the mineral wealth of the Chinipur district, and Najaf Khan had wavered. They had sat together playing checkers, discussing the vast outside world beyond the borders

"The Khan's Gift," copyright, 1932, by J. D. Newsom.

of the khan's kingdom, even beyond the shadow of the distant snow-capped Himalayas, and Collier had come to admire the slow speaking, placid old man. He was so tolerant, so courteous, so indifferent to the breathless young civilization which was pressing all about the crags and crannies of his territory.

There was a trace of Tibetan blood in his veins which accentuated his fatalistic outlook, but the spirit of the Aryan forebears gave him courage and strength and resource. He governed his motley subjects with a grip of steel and the hardiest of border raiders, the cunningest cattle lifter went in awe of the law of Najaf Kahn. "Raid the lowlands," ran the local proverb, "for there there are only the wide-flying bullets to face; but in the hills beware of Najaf Khan, his word bites like a two-edged sword."

This man Collier had tried to deceive at Horridge's behest. Horridge! At the name Collier shifted uneasily in his chair. Horridge had rescued him the year before when the coolie strike drove so many of the small Assam tea planters to the wall. Horridge it was who had sent him here to secure the coveted privilege of working the Chinipur hills. And Horridge was waiting for him now down at Sobrahar.

Well, he had failed and he was pleased! Pleased because he had not been able to hoodwink Najaf Khan. Horridge might think him ungrateful, Collier decided, but he would sever his connection as soon as he returned to Sobrahar.

Horridge had called Najaf Kahn "a prejudiced old fool who's not too popular with Government just at present. Bully him he'll come to heel. He hates me as you know, but you shouldn't have much trouble."

Collier pulled a battered pipe from his pocket and was filling it when his body-servant salaamed before him.

"Daulat Rao from the palace requests an audience, *sahib*."

"H'm!" Collier sat up suddenly on the alert. "What's he doing around the back way? Send him to me, *juldee*."

There entered a slim, dapper native dressed in a red and yellow blazer, white flannel trousers and white kid shoes. On his arm he trailed a dun-colored cloak.

"Ah, Mister Collier," he smiled. "This is doubtless a surprize."

"It is," commented Collier, curiously surveying his visitor's attire.

"I thought you would feel more at ease if I came garbed in what may be called conventional European attire. This is part of my Cambridge—ah—kit."

"And you walked through Kisleh like that?" exclaimed Collier, thinking of the rabble within the gates.

"This cloak," laughed Daulat Rao, "covered a multitude of sartorial sins."

"Sit down," urged Collier, "and tell me what I can do for you."

"Will you offer me a *chota* peg before I begin? Then I shall draw my chair a little closer, for the night—" he glanced across the plain toward the lights of the city—"is full of prying ears."

"So your mission has not met with success," he murmured when a servant had placed the whisky and soda at his elbow. "That is too bad."

"Thanks," answered Collier.

He felt vaguely irritated at the native's slightly condescending tone, his assumption of patronizing superiority.

"Yess—you were so hasty! With Asiatics, such as my master, to haggle and bargain is the very essence of life. Now, had you dealt with me——"

With face, shoulders and hands he expressed how easy such transactions would have been.

"Quite so, but that doesn't alter the facts of the case. Najaf——"

"Not so loud, not so loud!" begged Daulat Rao.

"Why the secrecy?" grunted Collier.

"Let me explain," whispered the native, his eyes weaving from side to side. "My master is opposed to modern methods as you have discovered."

"He's opposed to Horridge and myself, you mean."

"Yess, and to all others who would develop the land. It is bad for us. Kisleh—but you have seen it! Now, there is a small group of intellectuals, led by myself, who earnestly desire control of the state for its own good."

"And—?" prompted Collier as he sucked at his pipe.

"Then we should open the territory to investors. You would secure the Chinipur concession. Our people would become part of the social fabric and would lose their suspicious individualism, obtaining eventually

a voice in the government. Do you see?"

"Yes," drawled Collier, secretly amused at the novelty of the idea. "I see. And where do I fit in to your scheme?"

"That is ex-actly why I visit you in this attire, to show you how ready we are to accept modern conditions. We have a large following in Kisleh. Oh, many, many men who understand our ideals. But in the hills those peasants cling to Na—to their leader, although he is but a name among them. I believe—" here he laid a brown hand on Collier's sleeve—"with your help we might carry our plans to completion. May I enlist your help?"

"Not until I know what you want."

"To tell the truth," Daulat Rao's voice sank to a sigh, "we need means of defense—ammunition. Rifles are not lacking, but——"

"Very interesting, but will you kindly get out!" ordered Collier, jumping to his feet.

"You refuse!" exclaimed Daulat Rao, still sipping at his whisky and soda. "Why, my good man, think of the wealth you are throwing away!"

"Will you get out?" barked Collier standing over his visitor. "I don't deal with traitors. D'you think I'd help you butcher Najaf Khan? He's a man—you're scum. Haven't I seen you all these days bowing to him, taking his money, flattering him? Get out—go!"

Trembling with anger Daulat Rao stood up and shook his fist at Collier.

"Any man," he spluttered, quite forgetting Cambridge and its careful speech, "who speaks to me like that—he dies. You wait. I tell Horridge sahib what you say. You *pleased* to lose contract, you say to——"

"Go!" repeated Collier, laying his pipe on the table.

"Not until I—" Daulat Rao began, but he left the sentence unfinished when he saw Collier move threateningly towards him. He fled hurriedly, clutching at his cloak as he went.

SEVERAL hours later as Collier prepared for bed a knife hurled through the open window missed him by inches and stuck quivering in the wall above his head. The would-be assassin crept away undetected only to return shortly before dawn armed with a home-made, smooth-bore rifle. The slug smashed an alarm clock, which noisily disintegrated into its component parts. Collier gave up all thought of sleep.

For ten days thereafter, all the way from Kisleh to Sobrahar across the great outlyers of the Himalayas, Collier rode on the alert for further danger. But the attacks ceased, and he went unmolested through the mud-walled villages where the hill-folk greeted him with the kindliness which characterises the last outpost of Buddhism in India. Tibetan lama and Brahman *guru* meet here and strive for spiritual domination.

The prayer wheel and the Kali shrine exist side by side, the blazing pyre and the stone cairn both lead to heaven. But the people, indifferent to the warring creeds and faiths contentedly worship the gods of the hilltops and the spirits of the forest and streams as their fathers did when Gautama was yet unborn and the Veddas unwritten.

From the hills where the snow-drifts shone dazzingly white against the barren rocks and the wind cut chill to the bone, Collier slowly made his way down towards the valleys where the sun became warm on the back and the pines and firs gave place to creaking bamboo-clumps and dark-green jungle.

Again and again on the long road his thoughts went back to calm old Najaf Khan, who had dismissed him, not unkindly, when his connection with Horridge had been discovered. Najaf Khan whose life was threatened by such zealous patriots as Daulat Rao.

II

MY DEAR Collier, do you realize that I sent you to Kisleh to *get* that concession—not to come back here with some yarn about giving old Najaf Khan a square deal?"

Horridge thumped the table before him in his annoyance. He was a man of about forty-five, gray haired, tall, commanding, with hard eyes and a thin mouth set in a weather-beaten countenance.

"I know," answered Collier. "I can't help that. If I had secured that concession I should have had to make it over to you, and as you know the khan doesn't want to let you in again."

"What's that to you?" snapped Horridge.

"Everything. I'm tired of helping you get the best of such men—that's my reason."

"Indeed!" sneered Horridge. "Indeed. Look here, Collier, you're going too far for your own good. Don't forget that I hold your notes for quite a lot of money. I saved you from a financial smash and gave you a job—a good job. And this is how you thank me! Why, man alive, just think it over!"

"I have, and I am through."

"Oh, no you're not. Don't forget, either, that you had no right to hire those Bengalis for your estate before you went broke. If I report you, you'll be prosecuted."

"It was only a technical offense," retorted Collier. "Nobody could attack me for that now."

"No? I can find twenty witnesses if I feel like it."

"Do it then," Collier flung at him. "You can't get me to do any more of your dirty work."

A crafty look came into Horridge's eyes, and his tone became more conciliating.

"Now, now! Don't be so —— cantankerous. I know how you feel. The khan got the better of you and you're thoroughly exasperated with yourself and the rest of the world. Just calm down a trifle. There's no reason why you shouldn't keep on working for me."

Collier doggedly shook his head.

"Yes, there is. While I work for you I have no chance to pay off those notes. It can't be done. I might get work in Shillong."

"You might," agreed Horridge. "But make yourself at home here until you find something. One failure is no reason why we should become enemies."

They were sitting on the balcony running the whole length of Horridge's comfortable bungalow, facing a strip of garden where imported roses mingled with the croton and the hibiscus. But the fields where the coolies sang at their work, the dank jungle by the river and the distant, cloud-wrapped hills were hidden behind the high, ugly wall Horridge had built around his home as a protection against marauders, for his nearest neighbor was forty miles away across lowland and swamp and sweating forest growth.

For some time Collier remained silent, unwilling to break with Horridge, who had done so much for him, yet finding it impossible to prolong the existing relationship. Before he reached a decision there came a sound of hoofs at the gates and as he looked up a party of mounted men cantered up the graveled pathway, halting before the steps.

Collier sprang to his feet. Najaf Khan! What could he want so far from his beloved hills? Never before had he been known to cross the border of his territory. Although Horridge's tea gardens lay astride the frontier his house stood on Indian soil and Najaf Khan's visit broke the practise of a lifetime.

Horridge, smiling and confident, advanced to greet the old man.

"Najaf Khan! This is an honor!"

Slowly the old man came up the steps.

"An honor? Who knows?" He turned to his escort.

"Wait outside the gates until I call," he ordered and stood silent until the last of the riders passed out of sight.

"You have had a long ride," murmured Horridge. "Won't you sit down?"

"No, I shall stand. Greetings, Collier sahib," he said cheerfully. "So you returned safely!"

"But—" began Horridge.

"Wait," snapped Najaf Khan, his voice suddenly becoming sharp and clear. "Horridge sahib, I have neither time nor words to waste. Once you were cunning enough to trick me, but I kept our agreement because I had sworn to it. You tried again and failed, so you sent Collier sahib to me—and that I shall never forgive. Next year our understanding comes to an end—I give fair warning—it shall not be renewed."

Horridge held up a placating hand.

"I am sorry, but you know how these boys bungle things! I should have seen you myself, of course. You must let me explain——"

"No!" the khan's face was set and hard. "You alone are to blame. I do not wish to listen."

"But you must," insisted Horridge. "Just think how rich in iron-ore the Chinipur district is. It could be exploited without difficulty. Your royalties alone——"

Najaf Khan looked steadily at the speaker.

"When I grant the right to use the Chinipur iron it shall be to a man I can trust—not to you."

"I am not to be trusted?" asked Horridge, his face going dark-red.

"No. And now, do not forget, next year our agreement ends. You have ample warning."

He turned to go, but Horridge halted him.

"You don't mean that! Just when the fields are beginning to yield."

"I do."

"You do!" Horridge's fists were clenched tightly to his sides. "You're going to ruin me just to satisfy a whim. Is that right?"

"Perhaps. Had you not sent——"

"Oh, that's enough!"

Horridge's exasperation gave way to tempestuous anger and blindly he struck with his open hand at the placid face before him.

The blow sent the old man reeling down the steps, and Horridge leaped after him.

"I'll have the satisfaction of kicking you out of my house at any rate," he snarled as Najaf Khan rolled over on the ground.

"No you won't!" Collier suddenly came into action. "Stop that!"

But Horridge was past heed or caring, he rained blows at the prostrate man until Collier sprang between them.

"Out of my way," shouted Horridge. "Out of my way—or I'll——"

THEN Collier's fist caught him full in the mouth and he fell half-dazed on hands and knees.

Before he could stagger to his feet Collier had led the old man through the garden to the gate. He saw Najaf Khan mount and ride away, his head bowed on his breast, and Collier come back grim-visaged to confront him.

"I'm going to pack up and clear out," he said. "You haven't the decency of a coolie."

"No?" Horridge's voice was metallic. "But we have a little account to settle before you go, I believe."

"Don't be ridiculous," retorted Collier, aimlessly collecting his tobacco-jar and his pipes off the table. "No *pukka sahib* would hit an old man. You know you wouldn't have done that three miles beyond the border, not even in your own gardens."

Horridge's eyes were bloodshot, and his lips were drawn back, baring his teeth, but he kept his peace until Collier crossed the balcony to enter the house. Then with incredible swiftness he jumped forward, seized a half-filled decanter and hurled it at the other man's head. Collier lurched, sagged at the knees and collapsed, his body sprawling across the doorway while the tobacco-jar bumped and rolled noisily down the steps onto the gravel path.

Horror crept into Horridge's face. He stood inert, swaying drunkenly while he stared at the unconscious form. He hadn't meant to kill—not here at all events. He would have to explain——

"My word, Mister Horridge, you would have made a topping fast bowler!"

At the sound of the voice Horridge spun around, livid and frightened, and glared into the smiling countenance of Daulat Rao.

"What d'you want?" he said at last.

"Just a few minutes of your valuable time." Daulat Rao grinned cheerfully.

"Not now. I'm afraid I've put this fellow out for keeps." Horridge passed a hand across his eyes. "I didn't mean to kill him, but he shouldn't have butted in. I was mad though——"

Daulat Rao dropped to his knees by Collier's side and ran his hand beneath the hair all clotted and sticky with blood.

"He is what you would call knocked-out," he declared when he looked up, "although that is a terminological inexactitude, yes? His left parietal is slightly injured. Concussion, perhaps. His skull must be abnormally thick."

"Thank God for that," mumbled Horridge. "I hope you are right. I didn't want to kill him."

"No?" commented Daulat Rao. "That is mere rationalization. Subconsciously you had the death wish. A clear case of suppression. However, Mister Horridge, that is an academic digression. Why not put this chap in bed and let him recover? Then I could more thoroughly explain my unexpected call."

They handed over Collier to the care of his distracted servant, an Allahabad Pathan, who spat in Horridge's tracks and silently called down a thousand curses on the evil-doer's head.

When they were alone again Daulat Rao, with the manner of an experienced conspirator took Horridge into his confidence and explained at length how he proposed to overthrow Najaf Khan and substitute a "really modern state." But he needed ammunition that the change might be swift and permanent!

"What about the commissioner?" asked Horridge.

Daulat Rao shrugged his shoulders.

"What could he do? If Najaf Khan and his kin are wiped out by—by a wave of popular indignation, what could Colonel Mosely do, my dear man? We are, after all, an unimportant independent state where violence is not unknown even at the present day, eh what?"

He winked broadly, and Horridge nodded, aware of the wisdom of the native's argument.

"You might succeed," he admitted.

"You bet!" beamed Daulat Rao. "Now you have in your cellar a certain store of ammunition——"

"How d'you find that out?"

"We know many things, Mister Horridge. But that is not the point. If you will let me have this ammunition, I offer in exchange the right to exploit the Chinipur hills without taxation or royalties."

"I should like to see the end of Najaf Khan," commented Horridge, thinking of the possibilities of the territory.

"But that is easily managed," answered Daulat Rao, mistaking Horridge's meaning. "I must hurry back to Kisleh tonight. Why not join me there next week? Then you could witness the coming of the new order." He sprang to his feet. "An eye witness; that is it! You could testify that there had been no excessive violence. Will you come?"

"Yes," agreed Horridge.

"That is settled. I shall send suitably disguised persons to take over the—ah—stores."

THE next morning when Collier recovered consciousness Horridge came to him—a smiling, apologetic Horridge who accepted all the blame, but who failed to mention Daulat Rao's visit.

"I really can't tell you how sorry I am," he concluded. "Please forgive me. I had no idea I could be such a coward. And what's more I'm going up to see Najaf Khan. I must have gone mad when I struck the old fellow."

"You know what'll happen to you there?"

"I can't help that," stoutly declared Horridge. "I'm going to make amends. It is only common decency."

"Possibly. It's a risky thing to do, but I wish you luck."

Horridge repressed a satisfied smile and put a hand on the bed.

"Look here, Collier, I daren't leave the place to run itself. I am going to make you a sporting offer. Will you toss up to decide whether you stay here until I come back? If I lose you can go on to Darjiling as soon as you're fit to travel and I'll help you in every way. If I win you stay here and look after the gardens until I get back."

He drew a penny from his pocket and idly twisted it between his fingers while waiting for Collier's answer.

"All right," laughed the latter. "I'll take a chance."

"My one and only English penny," commented Horridge, "and an old one. Sort of heirloom—Queen Victoria as a young woman. Well, here goes—heads you stay here."

He flicked the coin up into the air and caught it deftly on the back of his hand.

"Heads it is!"

He held out the coin for inspection.

"Well, I'll start tomorrow," he went on. "I should be back within three weeks. Sure you don't mind?"

"Quite sure," answered Collier. "But I don't think I shall be of much use for a few days."

"Don't bother about that," said Horridge, already halfway across the room. "I sha'n't be long."

When he reached the outskirts of Kisleh several days later he was met in state by Daulat Rao.

"Success," cried the latter as he shook hands. "Najaf Khan fled when we stormed the palace. Come up to our headquarters."

He led the way through the filth-cluttered streets, past the gates—where half a dozen of the khan's supporters hung all in a row—and on into the palace. Horridge sniffed his disapproval. Gone was the cleanly order of old. The halls echoed with cries and shouts, city ruffians clad in rags, armed with swords and rifles, slept and ate and quarreled in among the shambles of the council chamber. There was neither order nor method; the whole of Kisleh had fallen into a drunken frenzy of cruelty and destruction.

Day after day Horridge tried to obtain in writing the coveted Chinipur concession and time after time Daulat Rao put him off. Nothing could be done yet, he said. Horridge must wait until the movement gained more headway, then he would be

rewarded. In the mean time let him look at the spectacle of a liberated people coming at last into their own!

Then one evening Daulat Rao came to Horridge with an anxious look on his face. Najaf Khan had come back. Najaf Khan at the head of his terrrible hillmen, and the gates had been closed against him.

"We are surrounded," he moaned. "Look——"

He led the way to the window of Horridge's room, and the latter saw the glowing camp-fires encircling the city.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"Do!" Daulat Rao was sweating with fear. "Do! We must fight. To-morrow we shall try a sortie. We must bring Najaf Khan's people over to us."

"How?" rasped Horridge.

"Oh, I do not know. Do not ask me. Something must be done."

"But you know the khan's reputation. He'll sack the place. And if I am found here——"

"That is no worse for you than for me. I was his advisor. Oh, what can we do?"

"God knows," sighed Horridge, falling limply into a chair.

"He will attack us tomorrow, I am sure," wailed Daulat Rao. "If only we had caught him!"

But Najaf Khan did not attack on the morrow. He waited until the half-armed rabble sallied forth and then cut them up skilfully and mercilessly. The remnants of the party fled back within the gates and the circle drew in closer about the walls.

III

"IT IS I—Najaf Khan."

Collier awoke from his doze and blinked his eyes at the speaker. Early in the day his servant had carried him out onto the balcony that he might enjoy the warm sunshine of the April afternoon. His head had mended more slowly than he had expected and his eyes still played queer tricks on him. Could he be dreaming? Najaf Khan! How had he got there?

"Has Horridge sahib come back with you?" he asked at last.

"No."

The Khan peered intently into Collier's face.

"Is he still at Kisleh?" Collier's voice barely hid his anxiety.

"Still at Kisleh," Najaf Khan smiled.

So Horridge was behind the uprising which had driven him from his home. That is what he had wanted to know. He had left his people before the gates of the city to discover what part the planter had played in the affair.

"And you know why he came to me?" he asked.

"He was sorry he lost his temper, I believe, and wanted to make excuses."

Najaf Khan smiled bitterly. "And no doubt he expects that I shall grant him the Chinipur concession—but that is not to be."

"I can hardly blame you," said Collier. "After you left he struck me on the head and then, having apologized, asked me to wait here until he should have seen you. This was decided on the spin of a coin, otherwise I should have journeyed to Darjiling long ago."

"You are leaving Horridge sahib then?"

"As soon as he returns."

"He will be back soon, and when he comes—" Najaf Khan's voice was low and gentle—"he shall bring back that concession—for you who came to my help."

"For me! But——"

"Rest now. When you are well, come again to Kisleh. You shall tell me whether the papers are in order. These I shall send to you soon."

And he was gone before Collier could recover from his surprize.

Beyond the ugly compound wall, out in the sunshine, the coolies were singing and from the kitchen came a pleasant smell of food. Collier sighed contentedly and prepared again for sleep. Nice of the old fellow to come all the way from Kisleh to offer him the concession. He would be able to pay off all those notes within a year.

IV

WHEN the people of Kisleh had been driven from the walls, when the gates were burst open and the narrow streets ran with blood, the broken rebels sought refuge in the palace. Outside, in the dusk, the hillmen paused, panting, before beginning the last assault. They laughed merrily when they saw the flames lick hungrily at whole rows of houses.

Up in the topmost story of the palace,

behind doors which were bolted and barred, Daulat Rao and Horridge sought refuge from the defeated mob. From the windows they saw the rout and the destruction of the city.

"It is the end," wailed Daulat Rao. "He will surely kill us. There is no hope."

"Shut up, oh, shut up!" bellowed Horridge as he paced up and down the room. "Isn't there any passage—any way out?"

"Nothing!"

Daulat Rao was crying hysterically, wringing his hands in despair.

"Can't you send an envoy to the Khan? Ask for peace. Surrender. Try to think of something."

"I sent Siladytia—he never came back."

Daulat Rao fell to the floor and beat the ground with his fists.

"I am afraid, I am afraid!" he moaned.

The sun disappeared behind the hills, but the glare of the burning city lighted the room with a wavering red glow. For an agonized period of time a heavy silence overhung the palace, then there suddenly came a yell from the hillmen. Some one fired twice from the wall of the outer courtyard and the last attack began.

Daulat Rao clung to Horridge's knees and begged with upturned face to be saved —to be taken away. He groveled and pleaded and cried, until he heard the doors give way, then he crawled to the farthermost corner of the room and screamed, screamed until Horridge kicked him into convulsive silence.

The halls and passages were full of clamor. Horridge, his ear to the door, heard a wild clatter of running footsteps, the agonized pleas of the cornered rebels and a noise as of a butcher busy at his block. A heavy smell of blood filled the room and a dark red trickle oozed in beneath the door close to where Horridge knelt.

Some one tried to force the door, grunted in surprize and tried again. At the sound Daulat Rao's frenzy redoubled. He threw himself against the shaking panel and implored Horridge's aid.

But Horridge had recovered from his momentary cringing fear. If he must die, why not die decently—five shots for the hillmen, and the sixth and last for himself. He had been a fool, but he might as well die a brave one. Standing with his back to the wall he pulled his revolver from his pocket and waited, the old supercilious smile again on his lips.

A glittering steel blade suddenly pierced the door, and Daulat Rao jumped clear, shaking and trembling. They were using an ax now and the heavy wooden frame splintered and slowly gave way. Daulat Rao, his eyes wide with terror, ran madly around the walls like a cornered rat, gasping and moaning.

At last the whole door fell in and crashed to the ground. Close packed, the hillmen stumbled into the room. Daulat Rao threw himself at their feet. Ten pairs of hands seized him and held him aloft; ten pairs of hands sent him spinning through the window as Horridge carefully picked out his man and fired. Then the weapon jammed and they were upon him, holding him down, face to the ground. One of them had twined his fingers in Horridge's hair when suddenly a great shout filled the room and a small man pushed his way through the throng.

"Najaf Khan!" yelled the hillmen. "Welcome!"

V

MOONLIGHT again at Sobrahar. Collier sat alone on the balcony, smoking his pipe, lazily listening to the thousand little noises of the night. The compound walls were turned to silver; the path lay smooth and white; a thin wind from the mountains rustled faintly through the trees.

If only Horridge would come back! He could have been in Darjiling a week ago, making his arrangements to open up the Chinipur hills. Collier chuckled as he thought of the sensation his news would cause down south.

Eleven o'clock—bedtime. He knocked the ashes from his pipe and clapped his hands to summon his servant. While he waited he stepped to the edge of the balcony and yawned as he looked up at the starlit skies.

Suddenly he caught sight of some black thing hurtling over the wall. It fell onto the path, rolled over and lay still just as his servant came to his side.

"You called, *sahib*?"

"Yes—but get that thing out there first. It was heaved over the wall a moment ago."

The servant returned with the package and gingerly placed it on the table.

"Shall I open it?" he asked. "It is of a fair weight."

"D'you think it's a bomb?" laughed Collier.

"Who can say, *sahib*. But those who give by stealth be the greatest of all givers."

He ripped open the stitches, pulled back the canvas and the inner wrapping of thick brown paper and there before them, blood-bespattered and grinning, lay Horridge's severed head.

Beneath the head, neatly folded, rested a document addressed to Collier in the khan's small and delicate handwriting. When Collier recovered sufficiently to pick it up there fell from the stiff folds of the parchment a coin, an English penny—the piece Horridge had used to clinch their bargain. Idly handling it, Collier discovered that both sides were identical—both bore the head of the late Queen Victoria.

VOICE OF THE VIGILANTES

***by* Eugene Cunningham**

IN THE gold-rush days of San Francisco, every man of importance belonged to a volunteer fire company; every such company had its building, its bell. But of all these bells, the one most closely bound to the community's life was that of the Monumental Engine Company, in Brenham Place, behind Portsmouth Square.

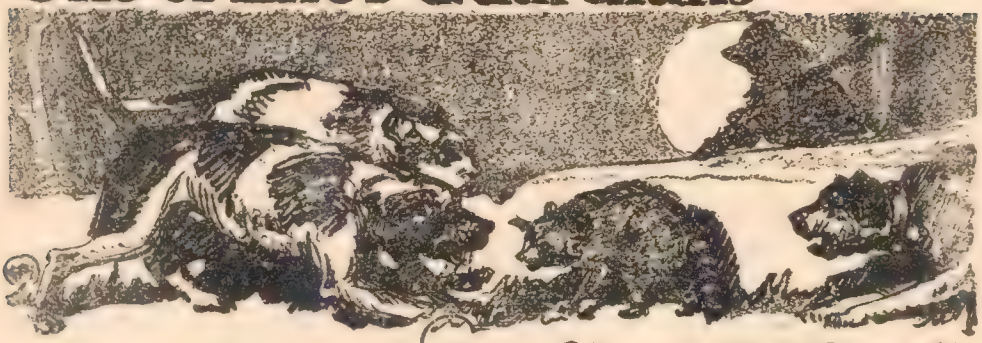
In June of 1851, sickened by *opera bouffe* administration of law, prominent citizens organized the first Vigilance Committee. The Monumental bell—many of the Vigilantes belonged to this company—gave signal for committee-meetings, later tolled dirge-like in token that some miserable "Sidney Cove" was to hang for his crimes.

When the Committee of '51 had cleaned the city and was disbanded, the big bell changed its voice again. Only when a fire raged did it sound a brazen clarion. Years passed, until the month and year of May, 1856. Then the better element, old "Stranglers" the nucleus, heard of the murder of the fearless editor, James King, of William, by James Casey. As if itself indignant at the cold-blooded crime, the Monumental bell swung in its cupola, pounded out a summons. A new, more famous Committee was formed.

In the following weeks men walked and worked with ear tensed for the voice of the big bell. It came to seem almost human; the city interpreted its messages as if they had been made of shouted words. "Committee meeting—" "Trial of prisoners—" Then, "Execution—"

When the "Committee of '56" relinquished its duties, viewing a better community, once more the old Monumental bell, like a good public servant, turned to its peace-time tasks. But perhaps the lawless element, looking up at the big bell in its tower, was not deluded by its silence. A crime-wave, a hand on the bell-rope; it could speak again!

One of Life's Guardians



by Clyde B. Hough

Author of "The Weakness of Men," "The Spirit of the Flames," etc.

HE HELD a short length of dead twig crosswise of his small, pointed muzzle, between his sharp, little teeth and racked leisurely along the damp, black sand which formed a gradually sloping bank for the river.

His nose and his bushy, brown tail, black-ringed, were somewhat similar to the fox. His ears were the ears of a cat. He was considerably larger than a very large house cat. He was not as long legged but much stouter than a fox. He was probably very distantly related to both cat and fox. But all in all, he might be best described as a diminutive bear. And wild cats had nothing on him—absolutely nothing—when it came to fighting, especially fighting dogs.

Scientific gentlemen write him down in their catalogues as *Procyon lotor*. The dictionary, in plain English, calls him a raccoon. But men who hunt him and know him best, leave off the "rac" and simply call him "coon."

So the coon racked along the river-bank, carrying a small, dry twig between his teeth. Presently he came to a spot where the bank no longer sloped, but dipped abruptly at the water's edge. This was the spot for which he had been searching. He turned his hind parts to the water and began slowly to descend, backward, burying his long, strong claws in the earth, climbing down exactly in the same way he would have backed down a tree. And all the time he continued to hold the short length of dead twig between his sharp, little teeth.

At first, only the tip of his long, bushy tail touched the water. But little by little the tail stretched its length along the liquid surface. Then slowly his hind legs were submerged, and after a time, his tail disappeared entirely under the surface. He continued slowly, very slowly, to back into the river. At last just the tips of his ears, just the point of his nose and his black, beady, little eyes, were to be seen. And still he held on to the dead twig.

If you had been close enough then you would have seen many small, crawling things literally covering those ears and that nose which were just above the water. They were fleas, those crawling things. Presently, almost imperceptibly, the ears disappeared, but not before the fleas had been given ample time to shift to the nose. Then the upturned nose sank to the level of the dead twig, and the fleas shifted again. This time to the twig. It was their last resort if they were to avoid drowning.

At this instant, the sharp, little teeth relinquished their hold on the twig, and the fleas, thus marooned, floated down-stream. After that the executor of this cunning ruse swam a few strokes up-stream, to avoid the flea-laden twig, and crawled out upon the bank.

The trick of getting rid of fleas in water is not a coon trick. It is a fox's trick; and this particular coon, in copying the fox's trick, had, I think, proved himself both progressive and mentally superior to the average coon. Another thing that spoke well for his cunning and his physical prowess

was the fact that he had lived seven full, active years in one swamp down in Dixie where both black and white men hunt coons nightly with trained dogs.

From the edge of the water the coon scrambled up the sand and moved agilely through a close fringe of elder bushes and reeds that lined the river-bank. Beyond this fringe he found himself upon high, dry ground that was covered with dry and rotted leaves from tall oak, hickory, beech and poplar trees. Here he shook himself, vigorously and so scientifically that after the third or fourth effort you would have been compelled to get your hand in his fur close to the skin in order to discover that he had been in water at all.

After that he started off at his peculiar racking gait, headed for the nearest farm-house. He was going to get a duck for his family. He knew exactly where the farmer's ducks would be drowsing through the night, sitting on the bare ground, their necks twisted around over their backs, each long bill tucked under one wing.

The farmer's ducks? Not as far as the coon was concerned. Such a conception was entirely outside his understanding. That ducks should belong to any one beyond the final captor and consumer was not among the coon's knowledge of things. Nor did he know that the farmer, or that men in general, thought him a thief for taking ducks where he found them. He was not a thief, for he knew not of thievery. According to his standard, he was entirely within the law, the only law he knew—the promptings of nature.

He opined himself a proper citizen, going about the business of life, reproducing his kind, protecting his offspring. And to clinch the matter, he cared nothing for men's ideas about the whole business. As he understood it men were nothing more or less than evil beings who chased him and set their dogs upon him out of pure viciousness.

THE time was two A.M. of a hot Summer's night. A full moon tinged the earth with a ghostly, silvery light. The coon racked on through the swamp, pattering through inky shade-pools cast by massive oaks and giant poplars. Here and there the moon, finding a gap among the branches, brought out, in ghostly relief, the stark, white body of some tall sycamore. It was a large moon and afforded rather more light than any coon would have desired.

Nevertheless, this particular coon felt fairly safe. One of the reasons why he had been able to live unscathed in the same swamp for seven years was that he had taken careful notice of the habits of men. Among other things, he had learned that men did their hunting in the fore part of the night, that shortly after midnight they pretty generally whistled in their dogs and went home.

So he did his hunting in the latter part of the night when there were no dogs and no men astir. Hence the confidence and the late hours.

The coon racked on under the towering trees, over the accumulation of dead leaves, from inky shade-pool to inky shade-pool. Two, three miles slipped by, and he came to higher, rocky ground that was covered with a thick growth of young pines. After that, the edge of a field and a small, shallow stream, clear rippling silver under the moon.

The coon followed that stream to where it twisted through an apple orchard. Here he climbed out of the stream and crouched flat, immovable. To all appearances he had melted, become a part of the shadow wherein he lay. But his black, beady, little eyes were busy.

Out beyond, toward the middle of the field, full in the moonlight, sprawled the dingy, flat farm-house surrounded by a cluster of out-houses. Among these, and of particular interest to the coon, was the hen-house. Minutes passed, five, ten, and the nocturnal hunter moved not a muscle. Save perhaps the muscles controlling his black, beady, little eyes. His purpose was to learn if anything human or otherwise chanced to be on guard in or about that farm-house. At last he was satisfied that no living thing was awake and watching the place.

He came to life. He kept his body flat, near the ground and moved forward silently, swiftly like some flat, gray-brown ghost. He reached a dense shadow cast by the hen-house. Again he lay still—the ground beneath him was not more still. One quick look around and then he closed his black, beady, little eyes. He was a wise coon. He knew that his eyes were traitors. He knew that they would betray him—cast back the reflection from the moon-glow there in the dark so that any one who

looked might see. Anyway his ears—his super-keen hearing—would tell him all he needed to know for the next few minutes.

Inside the hen-house he heard a faint rustle as a drowsing hen shifted her position. That was all. That and the chirping of crickets. The coon strained his ears and waited. More minutes passed. Then away off from the distance there came the dismal voice of an owl, *hoo, hoo, hoo*. The coon cursed him silently, vindictively—at least we may suppose that coons, like men, resort to profanity—for if that clumsy, old flapper should come flapping in search of a chicken or a duck, he would most undoubtedly alarm and arouse the whole barnyard before he made his catch and flapped away. The coon may not have experienced the thought thus accurately arranged, but he was poignantly aware of its entire gist.

However, the owl was far away—so far that it failed to disturb the sleeping fowl—so far that there was still plenty of time for the coon's purpose. The coon opened his eyes now, convinced that no human or dog was astir to see them glow in the moonlight. Then he moved swiftly but silently forward.

The fat, foolish ducks sat upon the bare ground in the clear moonlight before the hen-house door, their necks twisted around over their backs, each with its long, flat bill tucked under one wing. The coon marked for his prey a large drake that sat at the edge of the circle. The coon was in the shade thirty feet from the drake, and before the tick of a watch could possibly have been completed the coon crossed those thirty feet and seized the fat drake by his fat neck—seized him by the neck in such a way that he never even gave one alarming squak. Even before the first frightened flutter of wings, the coon, carrying the drake, was back beyond the shadows and racing across the field.

The coon came to the little stream of shallow water. He went down into the stream and, carrying his drake, trailed along in the water. This procedure would obliterate his spoor for a distance at least. He followed the stream into the pine woods, still trailing in the water, followed it until it turned squarely in the opposite direction from his home in the swamp. Then he climbed out of the stream with his drake and, at his best speed, headed for his home in the swamp.

The coon's home was a capacious hollow some sixty feet up the bole of the largest oak in that swamp. The hollow was padded with dry leaves and not a few feathers from various fowl. When the coon, pushing the drake before him, crawled into the round apperture which served as entrance to his dwelling, one of the first things that attracted his attention was the smell of fresh meat. Upon closer inspection, he discovered the freshly stripped carcasses of two quail.

Mother coon, his mate, had been doing some hunting on her own account; and their three little coons were sleeping on their full little bellies. This pleased the coon greatly. He nosed his mate in a way that must have been intended to be affectionate—and they began on the fat drake.

The coon stripped a choice piece of meat from the drake's thigh bone and suddenly lifted his head, the meat still hanging from his mouth. There had come to his ears the faint baying of a dog. He dropped the meat, closed his black, beady, little eyes and thrust his head outside the entrance to his hole, the better to judge the meaning of that ominous barking. For quite a space of time he heard nothing, but he remained listening, his sharp nose thrust into the moonlight, his forepaws on the rim of the hole.

Suddenly he dropped backward on to his family. Not fifty yards from the root of his tree-home he had heard once more the baying of a dog. It had come so suddenly that he had opened, for one instant, his black, beady, little eyes and in that fleeting breath of time, he had seen the farmer and his son with torches in their hands, following the dogs.

The farmer had lost ducks and chickens enough; and the tracks about the place, after each raid, were the tracks of a coon. He had hunted the coon before midnight on many nights and the hunting had been of no avail. So he had decided to try his luck just before daylight. Hence the result that now confronted the coon.

THE baying dogs came closer with each second. It was but a matter of minutes until they were yapping, clawing and jumping at the very base of the massive oak.

The men came up with their torch-lights. The biting thud of axes came up to the terrified little family in the hollow. But

there was no panic, and five stones could not have moved less than the five coons up there. That is not until the head of the house had made up his mind what course to pursue.

The coon crawled out of his hollow, his eyes closed tight, feeling his way. He was alone. The mother coon would know what to do when the proper time came. She could take care of her part. Leave that to her.

The men had been chopping away for some time, one at each side of the great tree. The tree must fall soon. The coon crawled down several feet and perched on a limb. The tree swayed slightly. The coon gripped harder with his sharp claws. Far below him the two men swung their axes. White chips popped out and whirled in the air. The tree swayed heavily. The coon flattened out on the limb and waited. A mighty heave, a tremor and slowly the great giant of the forest leaned far to one side; then hesitated as if in one last attempt to right itself. But the attempt was too late. The tree leaned farther out, gained momentum and started down, crashing boughs and lesser trees as it went. The farmer and his son were holding their dogs now lest they rush in and be struck by the falling timber.

The crashing tree struck the ground with a mighty boom, rebounded once and settled back into the trench it had made and lay still amid the swishing, sweeping and lashing of boughs and bushes. The men turned their dogs loose now, all three of them, and they came rushing along the fallen tree. The coon held his place upon the limb, motionless. The dogs came on, loud in their barking. One of them spied the coon clinging to the limb. The dog sprang upon the coon with a snarl. He sprang back with a yelp, and he carried with him a slashed and bleeding ear. The other two dogs rushed to the scene.

It was exactly what the coon had wanted. From now on he would keep the three dogs so busy that they would not discover his family. The coon dropped to the ground beside the fallen tree—on the opposite side from the entrance to his hollow.

In a breath the three dogs were upon him. He placed his back against the wall afforded by the fallen tree. What had gone before was merely the preliminary. The three dogs snapped almost in unison. Their teeth clicked on empty air, closed over the space that had been occupied by the coon. The miss had been so slight that each dog's nose rubbed coon fur, but that was all.

There was a double motion of two short cat-like paws and two of the dogs felt four ripping talons each in his hide. And in that same instant the third dog knew the feel of the coon's teeth. But they were game dogs and they pressed forward.

The coon was not there. At each attack, he slashed and bit and evaded. There were yelps and snarls from the dogs as their ears were ripped, then their noses roweled. And always the coon moved away from the hollow and his family. And always he fought with his back against the fallen tree.

Had he chosen to make a dash for the river, he could have outrun the dogs for that short distance. The river was but a few hundred yards away. But he would not do that for the river must be left as an avenue of escape for mother coon and the little ones. The coon fought his way along the log, scratching, biting, evading, but constantly drawing the dogs away from his family.

Was this love? Was this conscious protection on the coon's part? Hardly. More likely he was blindly, faithfully obeying the only law he knew, the dictates of nature. He was a male and nature builds all her males that way. If they are not that way later, it is because something has gone wrong with them.

The fighting, scratching tangle of dogs and coon finally reached the stump of the big tree. The coon rolled himself into a ball, bounced under the dogs and lying on his back attacked their bellies with claw and tooth. The dogs scattered surprized, yelping. This was the respite the coon had sought. Like a flash, he writhed over on to his feet and stretched away in a sprint that left the surprized dogs yards behind.

They recovered and started after him. The coon must have chuckled to himself then. He was still taking the foolish dogs away from his family. He ran now parallel to the river, up-stream. He ran until his wind began to go, until his eyes saw things dimly. He began to lose speed. The dogs were closing up. He had done all he could do. He must take to the water now; he welcomed the chance. There were some things he could do to these dogs in the water—things that would please him well.

THE mother coon, crouched and listening back in the hollow in the big tree, heard and knew when her mate and the dogs turned in and started for the river. This was her cue. Like a she cat, she took her young by their necks and dropped them one by one outside of the hollow. Then she climbed out herself and rooted and cuffed them on to her back, whereat she racked away toward the river.

At the water, with the three little coons clinging to her back, their little claws sticking into her very hide, she started swimming for the opposite shore. While up the river, the he coon had taken to the water, and the three dogs had followed him. Not all dogs will do it.

In the water, the coon dived, ducked and swam about with an agility that the dogs could never hope to match. Still they were three to one. The coon, making a quick lunge below the surface, came up exactly under one of the dogs, clinched his sharp teeth in the dog's throat in a way which allowed that animal no chance to bite and then sank like a stone, carrying the dog with him. For a full three minutes the coon stayed down, holding grimly to the thrashing, gurgling, bubbling, drowning dog. At last the dog lay inert on the muddy bottom. The coon let go his hold and shot to the surface to get air.

Daylight was breaking over the swamp. The farmer and his son stood upon the bank. The farmer had a rifle in his hands. The remaining two dogs saw the coon's nose the same instant he poked it above water. They made for him, swimming at their best speed. The coon could not dive now—he still needed air, badly. He swam here and yonder around the dogs, moving in swiftly, slashing them with his steel like claws.

On the bank the farmer raised his rifle. It was light enough to distinguish the coon from the dogs. The farmer shifted his rifle muzzle up and down from side to side, waiting till he could get a shot at the coon without the chance of hitting one of the dogs. The coon backed off from the dogs preparatory to one of his swift attacks.

Suddenly a whining sound came to his ears, and in the same instant he felt a numbing blow against his chest and the front part of one of his shoulders. Then he heard the crack of the rifle and red blood began spreading on the water. The coon sank, dropped to the bottom like a rock.

Down there on the bottom he turned his nose down-stream and began to swim, but it was slow work now. The fore part of his body was weak, and one of his fore legs was entirely helpless. But he had wonderful stamina, that coon. He made his way down-stream, under water till he could go no longer without breath. He started up for air. Then, to his great, good fortune, he ran bang into the branches of a tree.

Quietly, stealthily he followed up one of the down-reaching limbs. The limb led him to the body of a log which lay upon the surface of the water. The coon hooked his good fore leg around the limb where it joined the log, and, thus holding himself securely, poked the very tip of his nose above water, close beside the log. It would have taken keen eyes, indeed, to have discovered him.

AFTER his shot the farmer noted blood on the water and waited a while, scanning the surface and watching the banks, but he saw nothing of the coon. He decided that his shot had been fatal. He whistled his dogs to him and left the swamp.

Across the river, some two miles down-stream from the scene of the fight, the mother coon installed her family in a hollow in another large tree where she had raised another family the season before. Here she waited all day expecting the return of her mate. But he did not come. Dark came and still she waited. Midnight came and she climbed down the tree. She swam the river and racked along the bank sniffing for spoor, peering, keen eyed, into nooks and crannies.

Presently she came to a fallen tree, its branches and part of its body reaching out into the river. She had known her mate was there before she reached the spot. Her nose had told her so.

She went to him crouched, motionless, among the reeds upon the bank, his head resting on his fore paws. He had had strength to get out of the water and that far—no farther. His mate went close to him, sniffed and confirmed what she had already known—the coon was dead.

HOW JOB HORTOP CAME HOME

by **Katherine Lee Bates**

THE Redriff bells were ringing
Their cheery Christmas chimes
When up the marveling village street
Moved a man like a ghost, whom none dared greet,
So more than mortal old he seemed,
A vagabond from vanished times,
Forgotten, fabled, obsolete,
White hair afloat, white beard that streamed
Over his breast, dim eyes that dreamed,
While the Redriff bells were ringing
Their cheery Christmas chimes.

The Redriff bells were singing
Carols his childhood knew;
But he heard the fierce Atlantic gales,
The flap of the torn, tormented sails,
Thundering shot of the Spanish ships,
The suck of the seas as down they drew
The brave little English vessels, wails
Of blackamoors taught by cursing lips
The name of Christ under crimson whips,
While the Redriff bells were singing
Carols his childhood knew.

The Redriff bells were swinging
Wide in their Christmas dance,
But he stared on trees where oysters grow,
On a monstrous, venomous worm, the flow
Of whose hissing blood sabled the blade
That struck off its two grim heads; his trance
Saw the golden cities of Mexico,
And in Bermuda's foam surveyed
A tawny giant merman wade,
While the Redriff bells were swinging
Wide in their Christmas dance.

The Redriff bells were flinging
Their silvery notes afar,
But farther than bells had ever gone
In a forest depth his dream flowed on,

A forest where poisoned arrows flew,
Fronds too close for the prick of star,
Where the day like the light in an emerald shone.
He shuddered with dread of the shaken spray
Lest a lurking tiger leap on its prey,
While the Redriff bells were flinging
Their silvery notes afar.

The Redriff bells were stinging
His frozen heart with pain,
For so in the great Giralda reeled
The bells o'er Seville, crashed and pealed,
While English heretics were burned.
He smelled their crackling flesh again,
John Gilbert, Barret, friends long sealed,
Two blazing torches, mocked and spurned
By that fierce throng. Old anguish yearned,
For Redriff bells were stinging
His frozen heart with pain.

The Redriff bells were springing
As young hands tugged the ropes,
But his old palms were calloused sore
With twelve years at the galley oar.
Cold, hunger, stripes, all bitterness
To break their manhood, crush their hopes,
Toiling slaves chained four and four.
For him, worn out, that last duress,
"Everlasting prison remediless."
The Redriff bells were springing
As young hands tugged the ropes.

The Redriff bells were bringing
Their tidings of great joy,
When up the wondering village street
Walked a living ghost whom none dared greet,
A ghost from the Inquisition cells.
None knew the powder-maker's boy,
And he, who had longed with every beat
Of his heart for home, still bound in spells
Saw not the spire nor heard the bells,
The bells of Redriff bringing
Their tidings of great joy.

Cheating Fate

by Herman Petersen

IT WAS early evening when the *Tampico* dropped her hook in the harbor of Manila. She was due to leave the harbor again at dawn, but even one short night ashore and at the gaming-tables held great possibilities for Duffy. He lost no time in leaving the boat and seeking out a den of chance.

Now he had stood at the fan-tan table all of the night, and his entire fortune was before him on the marked cloth. With the little ebony stick the croupier deftly separated four coins from the rapidly diminishing pile and swept them to one side. Duffy watched him feverishly.

Again and again the croupier plied his wand. The game was nearly done now. As the clinking heap of uncounted coins shrank under the thin stick, Duffy tried to forecast the end. His money was on the fourth side of the square. He was betting that, when the croupier made the last separation of four coins, four other coins would still remain on the board. If his guess was correct, he would win. A few more swift movements of the separating stick and it would be over—the winner would be paid.

Duffy bent forward eagerly. A newcomer jostled into a place beside him at the table, and for a moment his eyes left the little black switch. He glanced back just in time to witness the last separation. He counted the remaining coins. Four! He had won.

He turned away from the table. Two thousand dollars in gold clinked pleasantly in his pockets. The night had paid him well. There was no need tempting Fate, or the croupier, further. Another night, perhaps, but now he had enough. He had won; he was satisfied. He walked away.

Then he became conscious of the fact that another had left the table with him. It was the newcomer who had jostled him, and Duffy instinctively knew the man and his mission even before the fellow's hand fell heavily upon his shoulder.

"At last, Bill?" he said without turning.

"At last," the other replied, linking arms with Duffy as they walked out into the street. "There's always an end, you know. Got a gun?"

"Certainly. It's in my rear, right-hand trouser-pocket—and it's loaded. Just help yourself."

"Thanks. I'll just do that little thing."

He removed the gun from Duffy's pocket and dropped it in his own.

Duffy permitted himself a slight grin. It was dark, and Bill Hammond wouldn't understand that grin even could he have seen it. Duffy fished in his pockets for a cigaret, found one and thrust it between his lips. He struck a match and then, with an exclamation of disgust, he dropped the flaming sliver of wood.

"Bill, I sure beg your pardon!" he exclaimed earnestly. "I didn't mean to be impolite. I'm rather—surprized, you know."

He dug a hand into his pockets again and produced another cigaret.

"Have a smoke on me."

With a chuckle Bill accepted the proffered cigaret. Both men lighted their smokes from the same match.

"Cheating Fate," copyright, 1922, by Herman Petersen.

"I know you're surprized, Duffy," Bill Hammond laughed forgivingly. "But, then, you've got to expect this sort of thing. You'd ought to know that banks don't forget a fellow like you. They don't forget—not if you touch them up often enough for very much at a time."

"I'll say they don't forget," replied Duffy. "How long have you been trailing me?"

"Two years."

"Two years! Must have cost them a little money to keep you going after me for two years."

"It cost enough," Bill admitted. "But vengeance is divine, you know. They'll spend money—good money—to get your scalp. And they have spent it these last two years. Boy, you're some shiftly little will-o'-the-wisp to follow. In two years I've seen more of the world than I ever dreamed existed. And now——"

"And now," Duffy finished for him, "now you've got me."

"Yes, sir," said Bill, and he wasn't a bit displeased with himself as he said it. "I've got you."

He inhaled deeply from his cigaret.

"I've got——"

He coughed. The change that came over him was startling. His eyes protruded from his head, the veins knotted on his forehead and he opened wide his mouth as he gasped for breath. Suddenly he crumpled to the ground.

For just a moment Duffy bent over the prostrate man.

"Poor old Bill!" he chuckled. "Poor old, wise Bill! Bet you one whole dollar you'll be suspicious of cigarets forevermore. You're going to be awful sick for a couple of hours after you come to—and two hours is more time than this lad needs to vanish completely from these parts."

He flung away his cigaret and sprinted down the darkened street. Then he slowed to a rapid walk, continuing his way toward the water-front. And as he walked, he put a hand into a pocket and jingled musically the two thousand dollars in golden coins he had won at fan-tan, advertising, unthinkingly, to the darkened world about him the fact that he carried much wealth.

And the advertising brought direct results. Without the slightest warning of sound there shot from the night a form seemingly all bared, tenacious legs and winding arms that flung about him, and long, sinewy fingers that clutched deep into his throat and shut off his wind. Gurgling, fighting blindly, vainly, the clinging, snaky thing wound round him, Duffy fell and rolled and then was still.

IT WAS minutes before he regained strength and breath enough to sit up. When he did, he gently massaged his throat with careful fingers. A white man bent over him.

"That—that you, Bill?" he gasped weakly after several efforts at finding his voice. "What happened?"

"I'm not, Bill. Name's Bert Handley," the other briefly told him. "A coolie strangled you."

"Oh, yes. I remember now. Tried to rob me, I guess. I had a little money with me—" he felt in his pockets—"and I've still got it. You——"

"I just kicked that Malay behind the ear," Handley said. "He's right there beside you."

"Very simple, no doubt. But it saved my life, I'm thinking. Anyway, it saved my coin. I'll do as much for you some day."

He got slowly to his feet.

"Yes, sir," he continued. "I'll do as much—or more—for you some day." Then a cheerful grin spread over his face. "Man, from now on I'm your fairy-godfather. Just make a wish. Your slightest whim is law."

"I'll take you up on that," Handley said with a quick laugh. "Here's my wish: Get me to the States as fast as you can."

"Done. That's an easy one. Just come with me." He took Handley by the arm and led him down the street. "We're started already. We're off for the States. I'm sort of anxious to get there myself. Got any particular way you want to travel?"

"None."

"Good. Know anything about the gentle art of seamanship?"

"Some. I could learn a lot more, however."

"Good some more, I'm the wireless wizard of the *Tampico*. She's a tramp, but she's down in the harbor now ready to leave at dawn. And it's nearly dawn now. We'll have to get aboard. The old man'll take you along. Just slip him a couple of bucks and he'll sign you on as seaman—no questions asked."

Handley hung back.

"I'm—I'm dead broke," he stammered.

"I'm not. You've done me a great service this night, old top, and I'm not going to leave you stranded in this port. Flush or broke, this Manila is a bad place for the likes of us. It's unhealthy. Why, you've no idea how unhealthy it is for me! I simply must get away from here at dawn."

He pulled the reluctant Handley along with him.

"Come on, man. Step out a bit! We're off for the States. Don't forget that wish of yours. The old tub's waiting. The dawn is coming. Then it's Honolulu, Frisco, Panama and little old N'York. Sound good? It does to me. I'm in a hurry!"

On the waterfront they found a boat to take them out to the *Tampico*. Duffy at once sought the captain, said a few words to him, jingled his pockets, and the deed was done—Handley was signed on as seaman for the voyage to New York.

At dawn the *Tampico* crept out to sea.

"DO YOU know," Duffy said to Handley that evening as they stood leaning over the rail watching the sun sink into the sea. "Your name is very familiar to me. I've been trying all day to place you. But I can't. Have you been long in these parts?"

Handley's face saddened.

"I came from the States about six months ago," he answered slowly, speaking, it seemed, with reluctance. "I brought my wife with me. I've had a bug for years about living in the South Seas—on the islands you know—and owning a copra plantation. But—I don't know—I guess Fate's against me. We started out to look over some promising islands. We ran into a storm, and our boat struck a reef. Wreck. As far as I know I'm the only survivor."

Duffy slapped the rail suddenly with his hand.

"That's it!" he cried. "That's just the incident I've been trying to recall all day. You chartered the *Shark*, didn't you?"

Handley nodded his head. "Yes, that was the name of the boat. Why?"

"I remember when she was reported lost. I thought I remembered your name—Bert Handley."

He leaned over the rail again. The sun had just dipped from sight.

"Yes," he said softly. "I remember now. There was just one known survivor of that wreck. But it wasn't—it wasn't you, Bert."

"It wasn't me?" Handley echoed, the question in his eyes as well as his voice. "It wasn't me? Who could it have been

then? The *Shark* smashed up like an egg against a brick wall. Not a soul had a chance. I was washed ashore on a little island. And I was the only one, too. I was on that island for months—alone. I know! I searched every foot of it."

"No one knew you escaped," Duffy told him. "The other survivor was picked up at sea—found in some floating wreckage."

"The other survivor—" Handley snatched the man from the rail and faced him about. "You don't mean—" he choked. "It wasn't——"

Duffy nodded.

"Yes—I mean that, old top. She was saved too."

Sudden joy, like grief, deals a numbing shock. It was minutes before Handley could speak.

"What became of her?" he finally whispered.

Duffy smiled into the night.

"She goes up and down the seas," he answered. "Searching—searching. I don't know just where she is now. But it wouldn't be hard to find out. I'll broadcast a query tonight with the wireless. I'm betting you, even money, I get an answer."

And he did get an answer. Before midnight Duffy had word that Mrs. Bert Handley was a passenger on board the *Nippon* bound from Manila to Honolulu.

"She's just behind us, Bert, old top," he said. "She'll pass us sometime in the early morning. I'll send the lady your love and tell her to wait for you at Honolulu."

He struck a match and lighted a cigaret.

"And, by the way," he said casually. "There's a friend of mine on board the *Nippon*, too. Name's Bill Hammond. Fine fellow, Bill is. If you ever happen to meet him, be sure to offer him a cigaret."

CAPTAIN PRINGLE had emptied two bottles of the cargo he had taken on at Manila, and when he came on deck shortly before midnight he was in a capricious frame of mind.

"There's a —— shark been following us ever since dawn," he declared to Duffy. "I object ver' much to having sharks follow me. Don't like it a bit. We'll blow 'im up. You two come with me."

Obediently Duffy and Handley followed the captain down into one of the holds.

"Dynamite," said the captain, pointing at a number of boxes. "Open one of 'em up."

Without comment Duffy secured a screwdriver and removed the cover from one of the boxes. As he worked scurryings and squeakings in dark corners of the hold made him pause once or twice.

"Going to cover this up again, aren't you, sir?" he asked the swaying captain. "There's a lot of rats down here——"

"Oh, —— the rats. It's sharks I'm after. Hurry up and get that dynamite. We'll cover up that box afterwards."

Duffy shrugged his shoulders and went on with the task of removing several sticks of explosive from the now-opened box.

"We'll tie 'em to a hunk of pork," announced the captain. "I'm thinking it's going to be powerful medicine in the belly of that shark."

"How you going to fire it?" Duffy asked.

"With a battery. You're the electrical man of the crew. Fix it up."

Duffy "fixed it up," and when he was finished he gingerly carried the shark-bait to the stern.

"Wait!" the captain suddenly shouted. "Don't throw it over yet. I'm not going to have that fish busting up around my waterline. The concussion might open up a seam. We'll tow a boat behind. We'll bait him further from the ship."

Accordingly a boat was lowered. Duffy and Handley, with the dynamite and the pork, were dropped several hundred feet behind the *Tampico*.

"Crazy old fool!" Duffy laughed as he prepared to heave the chunk of pork overboard. "But we might as well humor him. It won't do any harm——"

Then it happened. A mighty blast seemed to lift the *Tampico* clear of the water, and a huge wave rushed back and nearly overwhelmed the smaller boat. The sea boiled—then grew calm. The two men, shaken and awed, were alone on the sea in a small boat. About them, strewn on the heaving water, floated tangled wreckage. The *Tampico* had vanished.

"Whew!" shivered Duffy, the first to speak. "Some narrow squeak that! Chugging along as pretty as any old river ferry. Then—*bing!*—and she's gone."

"What do you suppose it was?" Handley gasped.

"The rats got in that dynamite, I'll bet you a dollar. It's bad stuff to chew on—sometimes. And there was quite a bit of it too."

Handley laughed oddly at the waste of water about them.

"Fate—my fate—again!" he said bitterly.

"And mine! She sure camps on our trails, doesn't she," Duffy replied. "But—cheer up! We'll cheat the old girl yet. I've been cheating her for two years and I can do it again. The *Nippon* should sight us before long. This old scow's leaking like a rusty bucket. She won't last long. And we've nothing but my hat and your hands to bail with."

"Suppose we went overboard," suggested Handley. "Just floated alongside and held on. Wouldn't she last longer that way?"

"The boat might," Duffy admitted. "But we wouldn't. Take a look at who's with us."

He pointed to their wake.

Handley looked and shivered. A familiar black, triangular fin was leisurely circling about them.

"Shark!" he exclaimed involuntarily.

"Shark's right! We'll just stay in the boat and keep him hungry. I'm positive the *Nippon* will sight us. We're right in her path. It's just a question of time."

They were bailing furiously, Duffy with his hat and Handley with his bare hands.

"If she only sees us—everything will be rosy," Duffy paused to pant. "If she doesn't—blooey! We can't last very long. It's leaking faster than we can bail."

THE HOURS crept slowly by; the water-line inside the little boat, in spite of the unceasing bailing, inched higher—higher. And the rough-surfaced sea, as if not satisfied to seep in through the small boat's seams, sent again and again battering waves hurtling against the lowering sides, and always of each wave-crest some slopped in. About them and their steadily sinking craft the shark kept circling—circling. Still the *Nippon* was nowhere in sight.

"We're losing out," panted Duffy once, measuring the water in which they sat. "And my wind's failing. I can't stand the pace. Old Nip's got to show up soon or all bets are off."

Then a faint feather of smoke showed on the distant horizon. Duffy was the first to spy it.

"Whoop, old top!" he gasped hoarsely. "There she is! And she's coming on a run. Here's hoping her wind holds out better than mine. And our drift is toward her, better luck."

The smoke smudge grew and came swiftly toward them; but inside their tiny boat the shipwrecked men measured the seeping, slopping water, and to them it seemed the sea raced the rushing steamer. And ever about them circled the patient shark.

Duffy stood up and pulled off his shirt. Standing, carefully braced, he waved the signal. The *Nippon* sped toward them. Handley alone was bailing on. And he was tiring while the sea gained fresher strength. The minutes crawled by; bit by bit the little boat settled lower into the waiting water; wave after wave flung its bit into the craft and added to the weight that pulled it down; and the shark now made narrower circles about them.

"God!" sobbed Duffy once, the perspiration streaming down his face. His arms never for an instant lowered the fluttering shirt or ceased to wave it. "God! We're going—we're going! And she hasn't seen us yet."

Then the lookout on the speeding *Nippon* spied them. Bells jangled in the engine-room and the great ship slowed. A boat came away from her side.

Duffy let his arms fall wearily. The white shirt, caught by the breeze, floated away to a distant wave. He glanced down at the water now almost to his knees. Then he turned his eyes to one side. That triangular fin was there, not a fathom away.

He measured speculatively the distance between them and the boat dancing toward them from the *Nippon*.

"Two minutes," he muttered. "It'll take them that long to reach us. And we can't last two minutes—not both of us. It's washing in too fast."

He looked toward the steamer. Bert Handley's wife was there, crowded against the rail, probably. She expected to meet her long lost husband in Honolulu, and her husband was in the way of being lost again, this time before her very eyes.

And Bill Hammond. Bill was there somewhere by the rail. There was no doubt of that. And probably Bill expected to meet him in Honolulu. He had outwitted Bill in Manila with a doped cigaret; but in Honolulu——

The little boat lurched queerly. He glanced down at the water quickly. It was a matter of seconds now.

Then he laughed, oddly.

"Fate—our fate! She's playing a cold hand against us. But—I'm thinking—I can beat her at her own game. I've beaten her before—I can beat her again. I can cheat Fate. Anyway—here goes!"

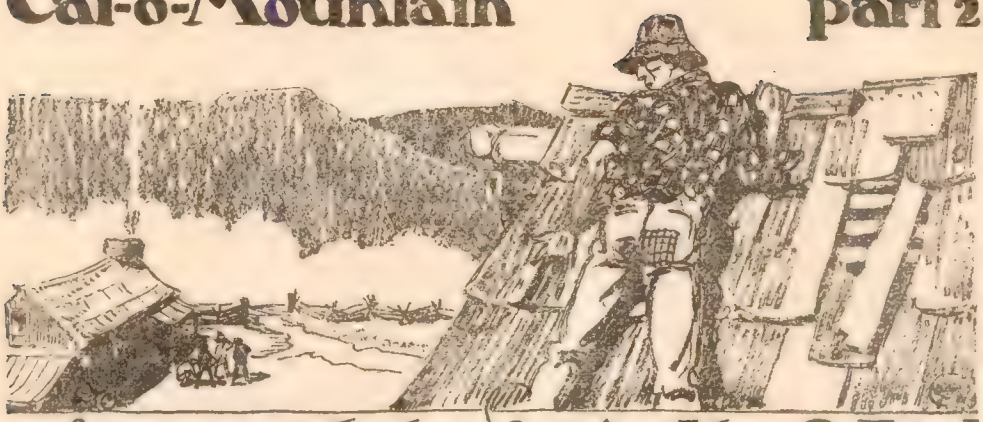
Suddenly he expelled every bit of air from his lungs that he possibly could. Then—he dived overboard and vanished beneath the surface of the sea.

Handley cried out in horror.

The black, triangular fin had vanished too.

Then, just as the waterfilled wreck sank beneath his feet, a strong arm grasped him and Handley was swung safely aboard the boat from the *Nippon*.

Cat-o-Mountain — part 2



a four-part story by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "Tupahn—the Thunderstorm," "Tiger River," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

AT THE northern end of the Shawangunk Range lies a region where the Maker of Mountains went mad. It was named The Traps by the early settlers, the men of Hendrick Hudson's day, and it is still called The Traps by the people who, almost a race apart, still occupy that desolate region.

There all strangers are looked upon with suspicion. The "blond man" Douglas Hampton, a newspaper man from the big city, found that no exception was made in his case.

One night the scream of a panther was followed by the cry of a frightened woman. Hampton's two-barreled shotgun eliminated the panther, and he found that the girl, Marion Oaks—"Nigger Nat's girl"—had sprained her ankle, making it impossible for her to reach home that night. Hampton doctored the ankle and watched over her for the remainder of the night in a near-by cave.

The following morning a young Trapsman named Steve came to the cave. He had escaped from the penitentiary and seemed to live only that he might be revenged upon "Snake" Sanders.

When Marion left to take Steve to a safe hiding-place she advised Hampton to make Jake Dalton's place his headquarters.

"Jake got kilt last Spring by something," she said. "You'll be safe there if Jake's ha'nt don't get you."

After Marion and Steve had left him Hampton felt a premonition of evil and, taking a small mirror from his pocket, held it so that it reflected the brush behind him. Soon he saw the head of a villainous appearing man rise above the rocks. Then a box appeared and a dirty, black-haired hand lifted the lid. A large copperhead crawled out and toward Hampton; then it stopped—basking sluggishly in the sun. At the sound of a sibilant whistle it returned to the box. The man's head and the box disappeared and all was still.

A few minutes later Snake openly accosted Hampton, and, thinking Hampton a detective, offered to put him on the trail of any one he might be after. Or—"If yer man ain't too well knowed, why won't 'nother do?"

Snake's attitude, his evident willingness to betray his fellow Trapsmen, angered Hampton, and the two came to blows.

A hard, bloody fight ensued, the issue of which was for a long time in doubt, but Hampton was the one to walk away; Snake remained unconscious on the rocks.

On his way to Jake Dalton's place, Hampton passed a dingy house; a man and woman were harvesting near by. Three vicious dogs rushed out, and their threats were backed up by the man—his brown face of a distinctly negro cast—who, sickle in hand, came forward on the run.

Just as things looked bad for Hampton an old man drove up in a buggy and, with his help, Hampton was able to defeat the dogs and their master—Nigger Nat.

Then, disregarding the vindictive woman, Hampton climbed into the buggy, and the two men drove off.

When they came to Jake Dalton's place, the old man—Uncle Eb—tried to persuade Hampton not to stay there. Seeing that his protestations were in vain, he promised to bring Hampton provision from High Falls.

"I'll git jest what I'd buy for myself. Then if—if ye ain't here tomorrer, I can use it to home."

That night Jake Dalton's ha'nt lived up to its reputation; but Hampton was tired and he soon fell asleep. All at once, he found himself staring wide-eyed into the dark. Something had moved. The bed was quivering slightly. Up in the attic there was a sound like that of bare heels going quietly across the boards. Then *it* began to come downstairs.

Very quietly Hampton lighted his lamp, gripped his gun and rose from the bed.

With a swift grab he turned the knob and opened the door. The stairway was utterly empty!

"Cat-'o-Mountain," copyright, 1922, by Arthur O. Friel.

CHAPTER IX

DALTON'S DEATH

A LONG minute dragged by while Douglas stood there, the drone of the crickets gnawing at his nerves. Then he pounced at the lamp and bounded up the stairs. At the top he halted and glared around the attic.

Nothing was there.

The tiny windows at either end, heavily coated with spider-webs, were shut as usual. Not a web was broken. Nowhere, except where one little pane had long been missing, could he see any opening into the barren room. He moved about, and the boards groaned loudly under him. They had not groaned under that ghostly unknown.

He returned down the stairs, and the steps creaked and squeaked as he passed. He slammed the door and went about the room, inspecting every door and window. All was as he had left it on retiring. He even glanced into the little wood-room. That, too, was unchanged.

"Hm!" he muttered.

Pausing at the water-bag, he gulped a drink. After once more staring around, he returned to the bedroom.

Back into his tumbled blankets he got. As the strangled flame of his lamp slowly died he reached to his trousers, dug out his watch, and glanced at it. It was now eight minutes after midnight.

"Hm!" he repeated as he lay back.

For some time after the light had expired he lay wide-eyed. No further sound came from stairs or attic. In the solid blackness he discerned nothing. At length he grinned.

"Guess I've laid you for the night, Mister Ha'nt," he whispered.

As if in answer, the bed quivered again. The feeling was as if some man standing beside him had rested a hand on the headboard—a barely perceptible tremor. He had not moved a muscle. Nor, suddenly frozen, did he move one now. He lay absolutely still, only his eyes moving.

Another quiver came. With it came a faint dry rustle. Nerves and straining ears alike flashed the same message: It was the corn-husk mattress now! The movement, the sound, was beside him, almost under him—as if a bodiless man were laying himself down to rest side by side with the live one!

With lightning speed Douglas turned and struck at the *Thing*. His knuckles crashed against the old cloth and its content of husks. Again he struck, this time into the air. With a dive he launched himself at the chair—clutched matches—scratched them. The yellow blaze showed that the room was empty of all life but his own.

Scrambling out, he lighted fresh matches and scanned the floor under the bed. Then he wheeled and looked all about the outer room. All was as before.

The matches burned his fingers, and he dropped them. Again blackness and vacancy engulfed him. Groping, he found the bed and lay down. Then he reached out, found his gun, and laid it beside him. And this time he did not roll up in his blankets. He only draped one of them loosely over him, and kept a hand on the gun.

"Come again, Mister Ha'nt," he muttered.

Only the monotonous chorus outside answered. For a long time he lay waiting, his nerves gradually relaxing. At length, still loosely holding the weapon, he dozed away into slumber.

He awoke as if struck by a blow. A heavy thump had shocked him awake. Instantly he knew what caused it. The table against the outer door had been pushed over. The damp night air was sweeping in.

His gun leaped up. Its muzzles licked toward the entrance. One barrel vomited flame and lead.

The flare of the explosion lighted up the portal. It stood ajar, but not wide enough to admit a man. Nor was any man standing there. Outside was only black, cavernous night.

His ears numbed by the concussion of the shell, he squatted there in the blankets, the other barrel ready for instantaneous use. Presently his stunned auditory nerves regained their acuteness. They told him something that brought a new chill crawling down his back. The song of the insects no longer swung through the night. And out there on the steps sounded a dull, slow *drip—drip—drip*.

With measured beat that dread sound hammered at his brain. It slowed, as if the first flow of falling fluid were becoming choked—or clotted. Then it ceased.

Shuddering, he moved once more to the

edge, groped about until he found his boots, and slipped his legs into them. Feeling again through the dark he located his matches. But he did not light one. With half a dozen of the little light-sticks in his hand, he stepped stealthily to the front door.

Long he listened, hearing nothing but a weird whisper of night wind among leaves. The air was clammy, and in it was a wet smell. He began to shiver again; but this time the cold was natural—the dank cold of dampness. Feeling about, he found a leg of the overturned table. On it he scratched a match, and out into the uncanny gloom beyond the door he darted the burning sliver.

The stoop was empty. The thing he had dreaded to find slumped against the wall was not there. Nor were the old boards disfigured by any fresh red stain.

Sorely perplexed, he ignited a new match from the expiring stub. As he did so a new thought struck his mind. Perhaps the dead thing was in the room, huddled beside him. He yanked the match inward—and found nothing but the capsized table, its legs wedging the door.

As the light died down a sudden soft sound made him jump. It was a single drop falling on the steps outside.

With a new match flaring he yanked the door open and strode out, angrily determined to find the source of those soul-sickening drops. He had not far to go. After one straight look at the steps he flung down the match and laughed out in savage scorn of himself.

The narrow steps were wet, but with nothing more sinister than rain. The dampness of the air, the utter blackness around, the silence of the insects—all told of a recent shower. Even now the crickets were beginning to chirp again. Somehow their sturdy notes, which previously had seemed doleful, now sounded cheerful.

"You doddering imbecile!" he jeered. "It's as simple as daylight. A little shower just before you woke up—a gust of wind shoving the door open—the drip of the eaves for a minute or so. And you, you hysterical half-wit—you shoot a harmless door and turn into a knot of goose-flesh because of that! Who ever told you you were a grown-up man? You're nothing but a scared-of-the-dark baby!"

He drank in a deep breath of the sweet air and nodded unseen encouragement to some lusty cricket in the grass near the stoop. But, as he turned again toward the door, he hesitated. Wind and rain could not be blamed for the footsteps on the stairs or the sounds and movements of his bed. Something urged him to take his blankets and lie down outdoors, even though the ground was wet: to sleep surrounded by the honest-voiced crickets, unconfined by walls within which stalked bodiless things.

"No!" he growled. "Back to bed you go, and there you stay. This is a fight to a finish, Mister Ha'nt, and I've taken one round out of three, with the other two drawn. I think I've got you on the run. Now let's see if you can come back."

With that he felt his way in, shut the door, kicked the table negligently against it, and returned to bed.

As he rearranged his blankets, heavy drops thudded overhead. Rapidly the spattering impacts swelled into a drumming roar of new rain.

"Aha," he nodded. "You'd look sweet out in the grass now, wouldn't you? By the time you got back in here you'd be well soaked, and it would serve you right. The Lord hates a quitter. Come on, Ha'nt. I'm waiting."

He continued to wait. Steadily the rain pounded on, varied only by slashing swoops at the window. His eyes closed. His breathing slowed. The tumult of the storm faded out of his consciousness.

By and by he found himself drifting over a murky waste of waters which swashed and hissed and gurgled in sullen enmity. Above was no sun or moon or star—nothing but a dreary void. Around was no life; he was utterly alone in the desolation of plunging waves, a derelict at the mercy of wind and tide. But presently weird shapes took form among the billows—ghastly, gigantic wraiths which mouthed hideous grimaces down at him and reached for him with shadowy fingers. They veered away before they touched him, and a great wind blew them apart into fragments of mist and spume. But they formed again, making more frightful specters than before, and stalked athwart the waste, half-seen through a roaring deluge of rain. They began to yell his name, and with the shouts blended a thunder of hollow blows. He tried to yell back at them——

HE WAS in his bed again. Wan daylight was in his opening eyes. The noise of falling rain was real. So were the loud knocking and the calling of his name. The pounding came from the outer door, and the voice was that of Uncle Eb.

"Hey, Hampton! Hampton! Speak up if ye're livin'!"

He jumped from bed, shoved the table away from the entrance, and pulled the door open. Uncle Eb, his mustache drooping in a bedraggled wisp and his body gleaming dully in a wet rubber coat, took a sudden backward step.

"Gorry, boy! Ye scairt me, a-snakin' the door open so sudden. I was about gittin' ready to go 'long. How be ye?"

"All right, thanks. Come in. Wet morning."

"Mornin'? It's 'most noon, son. Ye been sleepin' all this time? Mebbe—mebbe ye was broke of yer rest, though. That it?"

"That's it. You were right—there are some funny things around this place."

The old man nodded quickly, and his eyes swerved to the door. Following his gaze, Douglas saw that the panels were furrowed across by shot, and in the casing beyond was a splintery hole.

"I ain't a mite s'prized," was the guarded admission. "But git yer pants on an' don't stand here with yer shirt-tail a-flappin'. I got some tobacker an' so on into the wagon—whoa, Bob! A little more rain won't hurt ye after what ye come through—I'll git it right out. Snake on yer clo'es before ye git cold."

Yawning, Douglas snaked them on. By the time he emerged from his bedroom Uncle Eb had returned with a bulky box which seemed almost dry. Without ceremony he tramped in and dropped the box with a thud.

"Thar she is, right side up with care an' dry as Nigger Nat—been ridin' under a rubber blankit all the way. Gorry, ain't this a rain! It's the line storm. What say? Oh, four dollars an' thutty-five cents. Thank ye."

"Don't thank me. Peel off your coat and light your pipe while I get breakfast—or luncheon, or whatever you want to call it. Why do you say 'dry as Nigger Nat'?"

"Wal—" Uncle Eb hesitated, looking toward the stove. "No, I can't stop. I got to git 'long, or the folks'll think somebody waylaid me—I'd oughter be to home now. Nat? Oh, that's jest a sayin' we've got round here—'dry as Nigger Nat.' He's one o' them misfortunit critters that can't never drownd his thirst, if ye know what I mean. He warn't round to visit with ye last night, was he?"

He turned toward the shot-scored door.

"Not to my knowledge. Sit down a minute, and I'll tell you about my visitors. Yes, I had some."

Duty and curiosity struggled a few seconds in Uncle Eb. Curiosity, of course, won. He accepted the chair and some new tobacco, loaded a disreputable old pipe, puffed as Douglas held a blazing match for him, and looked expectant. Douglas, his own pipe aglow, forthwith enlightened him as to the happenings of the night. He made merry over his various scares; but the older man, his eyes soberly traveling from door to door, did not echo his mirth.

"By mighty, boy, I take off my hat to ye," he barked. "I ain't scairt o' nothin' that walks or crawls or swims or flies, an' I ain't soop'stitious nuther, but I don't want to live into no house where things walks without feet an' jiggles a bed without no hands. No sirree! I guess mebbe 'twas the wind that blowed yer door open—must of been. But them other things——"

He shook his head and spat noisily on the floor.

"I want to tell ye sumpthin'," he went on. "I thought I wouldn't tell ye yesterday so's ye wouldn't git scairt beforehand; but after I went 'long I wished I had, so's ye'd be ready. I been worried ever sence. Thinks I, if anything comes to ye into the night an' catches ye asleep it'll be my fault for not tellin' ye.

"Wal, now, this house was Jake Dalton's. He warn't a sociable critter, lived all by hisself, kind o' growled if ye spoke to him; an' he used to go 'way for days to a time—had sumpthin' to do up back, mebbe—I never ast no questions. But I drive up an' down 'tween here an' High Falls pretty reg'lar—I git my mail thar an' so on—an' I know how everything looks 'long the way. An' Jake's door was always shut, whether he was to home or not—'less'n he jest happened to be comin' out when I went by.

"But one day I see this door a-standin' a little ways open an' Jake nowheres round. I didn't say nothin'—I went 'long an' come back, an' 'twas jest the same. I kind o' figgered about it, but then I thought mebbe

Jake was drinkin' up a new jug inside here an' didn't know 'nough to shut his door—he used to git that way. So I went 'long. But about three-four days later on somebody said Jake's door was open yit, an'—wal, some of us come down here to see what was what.

"Jake was out back. He was the deadest man I ever see. He'd been thar—I dunno how long, but too long anyway. I ain't a-goin' to tell ye how he looked—I don't want to remember it too plain. But we couldn't see a mark onto him, an' we dunno yit what kilt him. But he got kilt some time into the night.

"We know that much, 'cause Jake was undressed—nothin' onto him but his shirt—an' we found the rest o' his clo'es hangin' on nails beside the bed, an' his shoes layin' onto the floor jest where he dropped 'em. He had got up an' tore open this front door an' run out back an' fell down an' died. He was dyin' when he run out o' here, too—he only went a little ways. But what he was runnin' away from—what had got holt o' him before he run—nobody knows. Nobody but Jake, an' he can't tell.

"That's all there is to it, 'cept this: Two-three fellers tried livin' here an' they couldn't. They heard them same things that was round ye last night, an' other things, too, 'cordin' to what I've heard tell; an' they *felt* sumpthin' that was worse'n what they heard. They jest couldn't stand it. So they took everything wuth carryin' an' got out, an' sence then nobody's been here but Dalton's Death—that's what folks calls the thing that walks here nights: Dalton's Death. I dunno if— Whoa thar, Bob, *whoa!* Back up!"

He clattered to the door and plunged out. Douglas followed, to find him grabbing the reins and halting the white horse.

"Got to go 'long, boy," he shouted from the edge of the road. "Bob's a-gittin' cranky, an' mebbe he's got a right to. 'Taint fitten weather for hoss or man. Come on up an' visit with me any time."

He clambered in and turned to yell an afterthought.

"Don't leave yer gun here when ye go out. Ye might lose it. Some folks ain't scairt o' Dalton's Death 'ceptin' at night. G'by. G'yapalong!"

Blurred by the rain, he rolled away and was gone.

CHAPTER X

A SCRAP OF PAPER

SINGING a sleepy little song, the waters of Coxing Kill flowed lazily down their stony channel into a deep green pool.

A week ago, swollen by the deluge of the equinox, the Kill had ramped and roared through this glen, overwhelming both the shallows and the depths in brawling, swirling flood. But now the tumult and violence were past, the raw chill had fled from the air, and under the soft sun of new October the pool had again become its serene self—rimmed by vertical gray-white rock, shadowed by shaggy hemlocks, reflecting on its placid bosom the snowy clouds floating across the high blue above—an exquisite little gem of sylvan beauty which would have held an artist enthralled. Yet it knew few visitors except the birds and the squirrels, whose practical eyes saw nothing of its charm; for it was well away from the Clove road, and few of the denizens of the Traps ever wasted their time seeking scenery.

Today, however, the little nook was not empty of human life. At the upper end of the small chasm a figure sat against the base of one of the hemlocks, its bare feet tucked under the hem of a faded dress, its tumbled hair glowing red in the sunlight filtering down through the eastern tree-tangle. The little birds and the woodmice, moving about in their unceasing search for food, paused at times to cock their round eyes at that unwonted gleam of red against the bark. But soon they resumed their activities, unafraid; for, though they could not understand what the girl sitting so quietly there was doing, they felt that she was a friend.

On her updrawn knees rested a slanting piece of thin board, and on the board a scrap of paper. Her pensive gray eyes studied the short vista down-stream, and from time to time she moved a stubby pencil lightly along the sheet, transferring to it new lines. Then, with a frown, she would wet a finger-tip at her mouth and rub out a line or two.

It seemed to be an absorbing task, this marking and erasing and studying, upon which she was concentrating her whole soul. Yet it was not so engrossing as to rob her of the senses which she possessed in common

with the tiny wild things around her. All at once she and a king bird which had silently settled near by and a mouse under a bush and a chipmunk on a boulder-top did exactly the same thing—froze in the intuitive immobility of the wilderness, looking northward. A few yards beyond, a stick had cracked dully under foot.

Among the tree-trunks a moving form presently became visible, advancing with no particular stealth but with the quiet step of a man acquainted with woods travel. The king bird launched himself on soundless wings and was gone. The mouse faded into a hole. The chipmunk whisked about on his tail and poised for a lightning jump. The girl made no movement whatever.

The man swung nonchalantly along the brink of the rock rim, plumbing with casual gaze the clear water below. Then he halted, his lifting gaze caught and held by the red glint under the hemlock. A smile lighted up his lightly bronzed face.

"Howd'y, Miss Marion," he bowed. "Are you 'waylaying' me?"

"If I was, you'd be all shot 'fore now," she retorted. "I could 'most stick a gun right into your mouth from here. Are you near-sighted or somethin'?"

"Blind as a bat, I reckon. I can't see a thing beyond you, so I'm going to stop and visit until my sight clears up."

She flushed and sat up straighter.

"Are you makin' fun of my hair?" she demanded.

"Why, no. Certainly not. What made you think that?"

"Oh, everybody does. They say Nigger Nat don't need a lamp with my red head there into the house, and anybody that meets me onto the road says he thought 'twas a forest-fire comin', and—oh, I'm sick of it! I thought mebbe you wanted to be funny the same way when you said you couldn't see past me."

"No, no. It was a poor joke, but I didn't mean it that way."

He dropped beside her, laying his gun beside his right leg.

"Don't let folks bother you," he continued. "Chances are that they'd give anything to have hair like yours—the women, anyway—but because they can't have it they make fun of it. It's the way of the world. What's this?"

His hand lifted the forgotten paper and board from her lap. She snatched at it.

"Gimme that!"

"Not yet."

He jerked it aside and held it out of reach.

"Why, it's a sketch! Let's see—here's the creek, and——"

She threw herself at him, her cheeks burning, her hands struggling to seize the paper.

"You gimme that!" she blazed. " 'Tain't no good—don't you look at it!"

But he laughed and stretched his long right arm to its longest, holding the paper a yard from her.

"Now don't get excited. I won't hurt it. I like to look at pictures——"

She tore at his left arm, which blocked her like a steel bar.

"You—you—gimme that—paper!" she panted. "If you don't I'll—I'll scratch!"

He shot a shrewd glance at her furious face and at the slender, long-nailed fingers now poising in curving menace. The restraining arm gave way suddenly—so suddenly that she pitched forward. In one flashing instant that arm had looped around her and pinned her against him, her own arms blocked by his body.

"You little wildcat, I believe you would," he nodded. "But I really haven't finished looking at the picture. So behave yourself. Now let's see—there's a hemlock—good, too! And the rock-edge along—no, that's not so good. But still, I can easily see what it's meant for, and— Behave, I say!"

Writhing, wrenching, heaving, she was fighting like a mad thing to break his hold and free her hands. His arm only crushed her tighter. Tears of helpless anger welled into her eyes. All at once her head dropped on his shoulder.

"There, don't cry." He loosened his hold. "I'll give it right— Ouch!"

Instead of weeping on his shoulder she was biting it. He dropped the board and lurched upward, drawing her with him. She lifted her head and laughed out wildly.

"Guess you'll let me go now, won't you?" she taunted.

His jaw set. His right arm, too, swept around her, holding her loosely, yet close.

"Think so?" he challenged. "Go on and bite! Bite hard!"

The blazing gray eyes burned up into the steely blue ones. Breast to breast, body to body, they stood, their eyes welded together. She made to move her head, but

the motion died. Still their eyes clung. And then something happened.

How, why, what it was neither knew—perhaps a subtle opening of some hitherto unknown chamber of the heart. But the fire died from the gray eyes, the chill melted from the blue ones; and something else crept into their unswerving gaze. For unmeasured minutes the man and the girl stood in silence.

Then his arms slowly loosened. Swaying a little, she stepped away.

"I—you—nobody never hugged me like that before," she whispered, as if unconscious of her words. "I'm—I'm dizzy, seems like."

"I'm sorry," he muttered.

"I ain't," she breathed.

Wide-eyed, she stared up as if seeing a man for the first time in her life—as if some fairy wand had swept from before her a veil through which she had regarded men as creatures little more interesting than any other common animals.

"Why—why are *you* sofry?"

He made no answer. His gaze dropped and rested absently on the pencil-lined paper which had brought it all about.

"Why did you—let me go?" she asked.

"I was thinking of—Steve," was his slow reply.

Her face clouded. Her head drooped, and her fingers intertwined.

"Steve," she repeated. "I see. I—I was forgittin' about Steve."

She sank down and sat with her chin in her hands, soberly contemplating the passing water. He bent, picked up the paper, and forced his mind to concentrate on it. After a studious interval he nodded and looked thoughtfully at the tapering fingers which so recently had threatened his face.

"Er—ahem! Do you know, Miss Marion, that you have the rudiments of art? I'm no artist myself, but I know a little about it. How did you ever come to draw like this? And why didn't you want me to see it?"

She looked up, but in a detached way. Then her eyes returned to the creek.

" 'Most everybody makes fun of my pictures," she said, as if only part of her mind were talking. "I dunno what you mean by rood—roedy—what you said about art. But I like to draw; it comes natural. I git spells when I jest *have* to draw things. That's what got me throwed out of school. I'd draw pictures and teacher would catch me and tear 'em up—and one day I 'most tore him up too: I flew and scratched his face, and I got put out, and that was the end of my schoolin'. I don't care. I don't want to go to school and work onto figgers and have 'em make fun of me 'cause my hair's red and my pop's a nigger and all. I'd ruther go off by my own self and make pictures into the woods and rocks.

"There was an artist feller here two-three years back—they come round sometimes—and I watched how he worked and tried to do like it, and when he see what I was up to he laughed and laughed and—I can't stand to be laughed at! I thought you'd laugh too, soon as you see what I made onto that paper."

He said nothing for a time. He pondered on her work, studied her again, and sighed.

"Too bad," he thought. "She has real ability, if it could be developed. And to think that she's the offspring of such animals as 'them Oakses'! "

Marion spoke again.

"Down in the city do men say 'Miss Marryin,' like you do? I thought 'twas jest 'Miss Oaks,' or 'Marry.' "

"It all depends. If you don't know her well, or if you don't want to, you say 'Miss Oaks.' If you're pretty well acquainted, so that you feel sort of friendly, it's 'Miss Marion.' You have to be real good friends to drop the 'Miss' part of it. Unless, of course, she's only a little girl."

"I see. I dunno if I like 'Miss Marryin', but mebbe I do, too. It's—it's kind of respectful, ain't it? Nobody never spoke respectful to me in my life. It makes me feel kind of growed-up. But I notice you keep on sayin' 'Miss Marryin' even after you—after you hugged me jest now. And that's only sort of friendly, you say."

He opened his mouth to answer, but closed it again. He did not know just what to say. He felt, too, that no answer was needed—that she was musing aloud rather than talking to him. A long pause followed. Then she spoke, not of herself, but of him.

"I hear you're livin' right 'long into Jake's house. Ain't the ha'nt there now?"

"Oh, yes. He's there. But I'm used to him now. He never does anything but tramp around and shake the bed once in awhile, and I sleep pretty well. How's Steve? And your pop?"

"Steve—he's all right. He's into a good

place, and I see him every day. Pop's same as usual—drunk most of the time. But you want to watch out if he gits sober. He's p'ison mad at you, 'count of the dogs. I'm awful glad you kilt them critters. They were always ugly, and I was scairt of 'em. One of 'em bit you, didn't he?"

"Not to amount to anything—nipped my side a little, but the worst damage was to my shirt."

She nodded, and went on:

"Pop keeps a-stewin' 'bout it. And Snake Sanders is out now, too. Snake, he was all lamed up awhile, 'specially his neck—couldn't hardly move it for more'n a week. He says he fell down into the rocks."

She paused. He said nothing. Then she added—

"But some folks say he got licked by a detective."

With that she faced about, her eyes twinkling now. At sight of his wide grin she laughed out.

"Folks sometimes tell the truth," he admitted. "But what about Snake and your pop?"

"Well—" She hesitated. "Snake's got some kind of a hold onto pop, and they've been together a lot lately, and pop seems to be soberin' up some. That sometimes means trouble for somebody. I dunno what's up—I keep out of the way when Snake comes to the house, 'cause I don't want him pesterin' round me. But you better be careful."

"Hm! Pestering around you? How?"

"Oh, he wants me to go and live with him. And he's got a woman already—Lou Brackett. She's been his woman 'most a year. But I ain't a-goin'. Pop, he'd try to make me go, but mom won't let him. She hates Snake 'most as bad as I do."

Douglas gave a soundless whistle. Her matter-of-fact statement jolted him. Then his face hardened.

"Is he at your house now?" he demanded.

"I didn't come along the road—rambled along the creek—so I didn't go past there."

"What you want to know for?" She swiftly arose. "You keep away from Nigger Nat's!"

For answer, he picked up his gun and turned toward the road. She sprang at him, grasping his arm.

"What you goin' to do? Tell me!"

"Teach that Snake to keep away from your place."

"No! Listen to me. That's jest what they'd like. You go trompin' into there with a gun and makin' a row, and you'd git it—into the back! You keep out. Let 'em come to you if they want, but you keep out of Nigger Nat's. You'll only make it worse for me if you go there—me and Steve too."

The last words stopped him. Frowning, he rubbed his chin and considered.

"Nobody knows I know you—I ain't told," she went on. "Mebbe I might want a friend all to once, and so might Steve. A friend that nobody knowed about might be worth a lot. And till then, I'd git 'long a lot easier if pop and Snake didn't s'picion things."

Slowly he nodded. Again their eyes met and held, and the frank pleading in the gray ones softened the chilled-steel glimmer of the blue.

"All right, Marion. I'll mind—this time. But only if you promise to come to me any time you need help."

The tapering fingers gave his arm a quick pressure. Then she stood back.

"I promise you. Now you better go 'long—I've got to go home pretty quick, and I'll have to go by my own self. Go on up the crick, as if I wasn't here."

He nodded and turned away. But he turned back.

"Keep right on doing that," he urged, pointing at the sketch on the ground. "It's worth while. You're doing fine."

With that he trudged away. The bushes quietly closed behind him. The little mouse came out, the chipmunk whisked in a yellow streak from somewhere back to his boulder, the creek sang placidly on. Still the girl stood looking at the spot where the man had disappeared.

"He minded me!" she murmured, a soft glow coming and going in her cheeks. "He minded me—and I bet he'd sooner fight than eat. And he said 'Marryin', too, not 'Miss.' But—but Steve——"

All at once she leaned against the hemlock tree. And the mouse and the chipmunk stood still and stared about, seeking a sound which blended into the gurgle of the creek but was not of it; a new, sad sound which they never had heard before. It was the sobbing of a girl.

CHAPTER XI

AT THE BRIDGE

AT THE edge of the water, beside a little bridge spanning the Kill, Douglas sat on a stone and leisurely chewed at a sandwich. It was an hour since he had bidden Marion good-by and resumed his wandering way up the stream; and now, though noon was not quite at hand, he felt that this was the time and the place to eat. The flat-topped stone was a comfortable seat, the sun poured its welcome warmth around him, the pure water flowing past furnished both drink and fingerbath, and somewhere among the leaves a phoebe-bird sang to him its sweetly simple little plaint.

So, healthily hungry and pleasantly tired by his morning ramble to this point, he basked and ruminated as if it made no difference whether he continued his upward course along the brook or stayed where he was until dark. For that matter, it made none. He was his own man and master, free to come or go or start or stop as fancy decided; and if he should change his careless purpose of the morning—to follow the stream upward to its birthplace in high Lake Minnewaska—no consequences would follow. What he did not do today he could do tomorrow, or leave forever undone. It mattered not, so long as one more carefree day was added to his life.

He knew, of course, that soon these golden days must end. Just as the gray chill of November and the ensuing cold of Winter would presently terminate this dreamy season of the harvest-time, so the necessity of doing his share of the work of the world must eventually drive him forth from the Traps and back to the hurly-burly of the towns. But the bleak time of the snows still was weeks away; and so, he hoped, was the day when he must desert this wild corner of the hills. Meanwhile, like the squirrels which roved about in search of supplies to tide them through the bitter time approaching, he rambled and gathered into the storehouse of memory many a mind-picture to feed his nature-loving soul when he should again be walled within the clanking city.

Every day since the ending of the "line storm" he had traveled the Traps. Time and again he had spent an entire day threading his way over, under, and around the myriad boulders lying at the foot of Dickie Barre's precipice: some towering on end to the height of their parent rock itself, bearing mute witness to the terrific power of the ice of the glacial age, hiding among them masked chasms seldom seen by human eyes; some leaning together as if placed by the hands of some Indian giant whimsically building a rock wigwam; and countless blocks of every size and shape, overlying one another at every angle, as if battered from the face of the butte by the hammer of a mad Thor.

In the long cliff itself he had found gloomy caverns and crevices which he did not enter, but which, he suspected, were by no means unknown to certain men of the Traps. The days were too short and his progress through the chaos too slow and arduous to devote time to an extended exploration of those holes. So he had viewed their exteriors with a shrewd smile and passed on. And, though no sound from within those gloomy portals ever floated to him, perhaps it was as well that he did pass on.

But he had not spent all his time in that labyrinth, nor had he passed southward in it beyond the point where his "catamount girl" had first cried to him in the night for help. Then she had been coming toward him from the south, and he felt that in that direction was her little secret dream-cave, and that not far from it the fugitive Steve now was hiding. Her secret should remain her own; he did not wish even to blunder into it by chance. Instead, he turned his errant steps in other directions.

Down the Clove road he had gone, visiting the Clove itself—a flat-bottomed valley through which the Kill meandered, and where old stone houses hinted at the Indian days when every settler's home must be his fortress. Along the way, and in the Clove, he had met men who stared with unmasked interest, answered slowly and briefly when addressed, showed neither friendliness nor hostility, but seemed relieved when he moved on. Only one had asked him a question, and that query was direct and personal—

"Ye're 'Hammerless' Hampton, ain't ye?"

"My name's Hampton," he had answered. "Why the Hammerless?"

A slow nod toward his hammerless gun had revealed the reason for his new name.

When he in turn began asking questions the man had moved away.

Now, ending his meal and dipping up a measure of water in his tin cup, Hammerless Hampton smiled at the memory.

"I'm getting to be a sort of desperado," he mused. "That nickname sounds like Bowie Bill, or Derringer Dick, or Six-gun Sam—Hm! Or like Snake Sanders. Hope the citizenry hereabouts doesn't classify me along with that reptile. I let him think, before I punched him, that I was dodging the law, and maybe he's spread the idea around. I'd give a big, shiny quarter to know just what I'm supposed to be. I know I'm a goat, but am I a black one or a white one or a spotted one?"

Downing the drink, he refilled his cup and set it beside him on the stone while he loaded his pipe. Then he looked at his watch.

"Guess I'll move in a few minutes," he decided. "I believe the schoolhouse is up yonder at the corner, and the youngsters will be out soon and chasing down here, maybe. But I've time for a smoke first."

He glanced along up-stream, under the bridge, as he lighted his pipe. Up that way led an unkempt road debouching from the sandy track leading across the bridge, and he decided to follow it part of the way. Then his eyes lifted, and as they rested on the railing above him they widened.

Leaning on that rail, watching him, stood a woman.

HE HAD not heard her approach, but she was there, and seemed to have been there several minutes. She was slatternly, frowsy-haired, olive-skinned, with Indian cheekbones and black eyes; garbed in a shapeless, faded dress, and barefoot. Yet she was quite young and not without a sensuous comeliness. Now, meeting his surprized gaze, she slowly smiled as if she had found her survey of him rather pleasing.

"Howdy," he said coolly. "Where did you spring from?"

Her smile widened, revealing the fact that two of her front teeth had been knocked out.

"Kind o' caught ye nappin', hey?" she drawled. "Was ye waitin' for somebody?"

He puffed a couple of times before replying, meanwhile observing that her gaze went a little beyond him to the gun-barrels glistening in the sun.

"Nope. If I were, I wouldn't be sitting here in plain sight."

She nodded with a bovine air of wisdom.

"Tha's right," she agreed. "But what ye lookin' for? Ther' aint nawthin' along o' here."

"Well, now, let's see. If I'm looking for anything, it's for the place where this brook starts."

She regarded him with increasing amusement. Then she laughed outright, her sleek shoulders quivering as she rocked on her dusty toes.

"I guess so. Yas, I guess so! A lot o' good that'd do ye, wouldn't it now? Ha, ha! Be ye findin' any cold tea up into the rawcks, mister?"

"Up in the rocks? What makes you think I've been up there?"

She looked up the road; down the road; at the bushy track leading away behind her, up-stream. Reassured, she laughed down at him.

"Oh, I hearn 'bout ye," she declared. "Some o' them rawcks has got eyes into 'em, mister. Ye've been up ther' a-noseyin' all round. Was ye lookin' ther' for the place wher' this crick starts?"

Again she shook with laughter. Coupled with the oddity of the missing teeth, her mirth was contagious. Douglas grinned in answer.

"Nope. Hunting a gold-mine. What did you think?"

To his surprize, she took the jest seriously. Her black brows lifted and her wide smile faded. Presently she nodded in that wise way of hers.

" 'Ninety-Nine's' mine!" she said. "But 'taint a gold-mine, mister—it's silver. An' it's fu'ther down than the place wher' ye been lookin'—leastways that's what folks say. But ye'll be a long time a-huntin', I shouldn't wonder. Why didn't ye say so before, 'stead o' gittin' folks all riled up 'cause they didn't know what ye was pesterin' round after?"

He stared, wondering whether she was making game of him, and decided that she was not. A lost mine! His blood quickened at the thought. But he kept control of his face and smiled again casually.

"You're the first one to ask me what I was doing," he told her. "The rest of them decided I was a detective without asking me, so I let them think what they liked."

"Ye're simple!" she scoffed. "If folks

knowed ye was a-huntin' the mine they'd jest laff an' let ye go it, but seein' ye a-slidin' round so quiet an' not knowin'—wal, ye can't blame folks for s'picionin' things. An' all to once ye might fall into trouble so hard ye'd never git outen it."

"Maybe you're right. But aren't you wrong about the silver? I thought it was gold."

She swallowed the bait whole.

"Nah! Silver, I tell ye. I'd oughter know—I lived into this place all my life, an' I hearn the story many's the time.

"Ol' Ninety-Nine—everybody's forgot what his real name was, 'twas so long ago—he worked the mine all by hisself an' wouldn't let nobody else know wher' 'twas. Bimeby he turned up missin', an' he never come back. But a long time afterwards one o' the Injuns round here come to 'Lias Fox an' ast him to help him onto somethin' he couldn't do alone. 'Lias he was pretty old but he was strong an' willin', an' him an' this Injun went up into the woods down yender, towards the ledges. An' when they got up into the rawcks the Injun blindfolded him 'fore he'd go any fu'ther 'long."

She paused suddenly and again looked up and down the road.

"An' then he took 'Lias a-stubblin' round into them rawcks," she resumed, "an' pretty quick 'Lias lost track o' wher' he was. But bimeby the Injun took the hankercher offen his eyes, an' he was a-standin' beside a big flat rawck like a trap-door, with another rawck a-stickin' up 'side of it like a marker. Then the Injun got a good stout pry, an' they got one end under the flat rawck an' bore down, an' the two of 'em hefted up that rawck an' wedged it. An' under it was a hole with some rawck steps a-runnin' down an' into the ledge.

"The Injun he went down into the hole, but he made 'Lias stay out an' see the pry didn't slip. Pretty quick he come up an' tied 'Lias's eyes again, an' 'Lias had to let him 'cause he was old an' the Injun looked pretty bad. Then the Injun walked him out a ways an' left him an' went back, an' 'Lias hearn the rawck go *bang* down wher' 'twas before, an' then the Injun come back, an' they went 'long out, with the Injun ahead.

" 'Lias, he got so curious he nigh busted, an' he slipped the cloth up an' peeked. An' the Injun was a-carryin' two big heavy bars o' silver. 'Lias, he knowed then he'd been to Ninety-Nine's mine. But he didn't dast say nawthin', an' he pulled down the hankercher an' never let on. Bimeby the Injun stopped an' took off the cloth, an' they was out o' the rawcks an' the Injun didn't have no silver—he'd laid it down somewheres. He told 'Lias to go home an' keep his mouth shet, an' he'd come back sometime an' show 'Lias somethin' that'd make him rich. An' then he went back into the rawcks an' 'Lias went home.

" 'Lias, he waited an' waited, but the Injun never come back. 'Lias got too old to go huntin' that place, but he told his boy Tom 'bout it 'fore he died, an' Tom he hunted till he died, but he never did git to it. An' Tom's boys, Will an' Abner, they hunted too—till Will got kilt. A piece o' rawck fell offen the ledge an' mashed him all up. Then Abner, he got scairt an' never looked no more—he says old Ninety-Nine's cuss is onto the place, an' no white man will ever git that silver. Sence then 'most every man into the Traps has looked, but nobody found it."

Her drawl was gone and her tongue flying fast in the joy of retelling a well-worn tale. Now she suddenly moved off the bridge and came slipping down the slope toward him. He arose.

"But ther's somethin' that everybody don't know," she added mysteriously. "An' that's this—the place wher' the sun hits the wall fust into the mornin', that's wher' Ninety-Nine's mine is! Mebbe ye can find it, mister—don't tell nobody—but if ye find it 'member I told ye. Will ye gimme some o' the silver if ye find it? I—I wanter git outen this place!"

In the black eyes upturned to his were appeal, revolt, wistfulness—and, as they continued to look at him, something else. Unabashed, unmistakable, they gave him the message that she found him very good to look on; that he had but to reach for her and take her. He stepped back a little.

"I'll do that—if I find it," he assured her, repressing a smile. "If ever I stumble into Ninety-Nine's mine I'll give you a full share of whatever is in it. Now I think I'll move——"

He paused. She had started and thrown a scared glance behind. From up on the hill sounded shouts and the thud of running feet. School was out.

"Oh my Gawd—git in under the bridge

quick!" she gasped. "I dasn't be seen with ye—quick—let 'em git by!"

She tugged at his arm, then jumped for cover under the bridge. He hesitated, scorning to hide. But she beckoned imploringly.

"Ye'll git me into misery!" she quavered. "Don't let 'em see ye—they'll stop an'——"

He yielded to her importunity. Seizing his gun, he bounded under the planks.

The spatting feet and the childish voices rocketed down upon them. The boards thumped roaringly, and into the little tunnel drizzled sand from the cracks. They were passing by——

Then a boy's voice shouted:

"Lookit! There's a tin cup!"

Douglas glowered at the forgotten cup gleaming on the stone outside. He started to move toward it, intending to drive or lure the children away without letting them peer under the bridge and find the woman. But he was too late.

Down the slope ran two skinny children, boy and girl, to grab the prize. Their quick eyes darted under the bridge. They stopped, and, for a second, stood open-mouthed. Then across their faces shot a cunning look. Upward they jumped again at top speed, and into the road their twinkling legs vanished. And out pealed their voices in malicious glee, screaming at the other youngsters:

"Hey! Oo-ee! Lookit! That 'ere 'tective feller has got Snake Sanders's woman under the bridge!"

CHAPTER XII

THE LAW COMES

DOUGLAS stopped, wheeled, stared at the woman. In her face now burned dull anger.

"Ther' now, ye went an' done it," she droned. "Wha'd ye go an' leave that cup ther' for? Ye fool!"

"Are you—" He hesitated. "Is that true—what they're saying?"

"Oh yas, it's true 'nough. I'm Lou Brackett," she admitted sullenly. "An' jest 'cause I stop to say 'howdy' ye go an' git me into this! I'm in for it now. Cuss the luck!"

"You mean Snake will——"

"Ah, he wunt kill me—I'm too handy. He'll only haff-kill me. But ther'—" A spark of spirit began to gleam under the black brows. "—I can git the jump onto him, knowin' what's a-comin'. I'll keep the sadiron by me, an' when he comes I'll——"

She paused abruptly, a new and shrewd look flitting over her face. All at once she smiled wide and rolled her eyes at him.

"I know what we can do," she gurgled. "Don't ye want a good housekeeper, mister? I hearn ye live all by yerself, an' that ain't no way for no man to live. I can cook an' sew an' take good care o' ye, an'—wal, ye got me into this; now ye'd oughter look out for me."

So taken aback was he that he stood wordless. She moved toward him. He stepped away. A lucky thought came to him.

"I'm living with Dalton's Death," he solemnly stated. "You couldn't live there. The ha'nt walks every night, knocking on the walls and——"

"Don't say no more!" she quavered. "I was forgittin'. Ye're crazy, livin' into that house! I'd ruther stay to Snake's."

Inwardly congratulating himself, he sought a line of escape for her—and found it. Up-stream the bank was thickly bushed for some distance, and, though the voices of the children were not far off, they sounded at a respectable distance. He pointed.

"Go up there," he directed tersely. "Get well away and then hide in the brush. I'll go talk to the kids—tell them they're cross-eyed. Oh, and listen—if Snake acts mean ask him what he's hanging around Nat Oaks' so much for. If you jump on him quick enough maybe he'll forget what he hears about this."

A vindictive glint crept into her eyes.

"So he's a-pesterin' round ther', hey? I'll fix him! I'll——"

"Get going!"

With that he stepped out and strode up the bank. As he expected, the children were grouped several yards away, eager to spy but afraid to venture too near the lurking "detective." At sight of him they retreated, ready to flee at the slightest threatening movement. He made none. He had a better plan.

"Well, what are you young folks jabbering about?" he chaffed them. "Can't a fellow take a smoke under a bridge without your getting all excited about it?"

They dug their toes into the dust, warily watching him. He took a lazy stride, and they gave back instantly—though they did not run. Pausing, he ostentatiously puffed at the pipe still smoldering between his teeth. The ensuing blue haze bore out his claim that he had been smoking.

"What's this I heard about Snake Sanders?" he pursued. "Snake isn't there."

Behind he heard a slight splash. The woman was obeying his command.

" 'Taint Snake!" yelped the boy who had seen them. "Snake's woman! Lou Brackett!"

A mocking chorus swelled out, started by those farthest back.

"Under the bridge with Loo-ou! Under the bridge with Loo-ou!"

Another boy, growing bolder, added a further taunt:

"Wait till Snake hears 'bout it! He'll hop onto ye! Yah!"

"Yah! Under the bridge with Loo-ou!" piped the chorus.

The man's teeth clenched on the pipe-stem, but he kept smiling.

"Hadn't you better be sure you're right before you start tattling tales? What do you think Snake'll do to you when he finds out you lied to him? And what do you think *I'll* do?"

The sudden hush and scared glances around showed that the shot struck home. None wanted to incur the wrath of Snake Sanders. But the girl who had spied the hidden pair—a gangling creature with eyes too close together—snapped back at him.

" 'Tain't no lie! We seen ye—me and Billy!"

"Saw me, yes. But there's no woman under that bridge. Why do you yell out that there is? First thing you know you'll get yourself into trouble."

Another hush. The youngsters began scowling at the pair who had screamed the news.

"She is so!" stubbornly disputed the girl. "I seen her!"

"Now be careful! Want to bet on it?"

He drew a bright quarter-dollar from a pocket and held it up.

"Want to bet five cents against this quarter that a woman's there? Any woman at all. If you bet and lose, though, I'll make your teacher get the money from you or give you a good hiding. Want to bet?"

The half-score pairs of eyes fastened wolfishly on the gleaming coin. The boy and the girl wavered and remained silent. There might be some trick, and the thought of a thrashing was unpleasant. As Douglas intended, their failure to accept his dare increased the doubt in the minds of the others.

"You don't dare to bet," he laughed sneeringly. "I thought not. Well, now, just to show you you're cross-eyed and didn't see any woman at all, I'll let you look for yourselves. Come on, girls and boys. I won't touch you."

Still they hung back. He drifted slowly toward the bridge, giving Low Brackett every possible second of time while seeming to urge the children on. On the bridge itself he darted a side-glance up-stream. Nobody was in sight.

"Come on!" he snapped. "I can't stand here all day."

A bolder spirit among the boys edged forward. In a minute all were coming. Douglas leaned carelessly on the rail and grinned.

"Look under, everybody! I want you all to see that I'm telling it straight. Use your own eyes."

They tumbled down the bank, spied all around, and came up laughing loudly at the pair of informers.

"She's gone!" yelled the boy. "She was here but she run somewheres!"

"Where?" instantly countered Douglas. "You've all been watching this bridge every minute. How could anybody come out without your seeing him—or her? Now, you two had better go and get some glasses. Then maybe you can tell the difference between a rock under the bridge and a woman. If you really saw a woman, why didn't you bet a nickel against my quarter? Because you didn't see any. Isn't that right, youngsters?"

His confident argument, poor as it was, clinched the matter in the simple minds of those who had not seen the woman there. They jeered at the spies, who were sullenly silent just when they should have fought back.

"All right, go on," Douglas waved them away. "Only remember, if I hear any more about this I'll know who told it around, and—you may be sorry." This time he gave the sulky pair a hard look. "Now run along. I want to finish my smoke without being yelled at."

They went, still poking fun at their discredited companions. For a while Douglas leaned there, knowing he was watched, and that while he was the focus of attention the woman could move farther away unobserved. Then he knocked out his pipe and sauntered away, directing his steps up the open road toward the schoolhouse.

"Hm! That was a sweet mess, wasn't it?" he reflected. "Maybe that pair of little scandal-mongers will keep their mouths shut, but I doubt it. However, the rest of them didn't see her, and she's out of it with a whole skin—if she has wit enough to get in the first word when Snake shows up. Mister Ha'nt, up to the present you've been a pest, but now you're a friend in need; you got me out of an embarrassing corner quite gracefully. Consider yourself thanked."

Chuckling, he swung smoothly along between the walls of verdure bordering the road, soon reaching a sharp turn where the road angled off to the westward. There stood the little dun schoolhouse, now temporarily deserted. Along both sides of the steep roadway beyond stood small houses quite close together. At the nearest of these was a workshop, and before it toiled an active little man surrounded by new barrels.

SOMEWHAT surprized by the sight of industry at this lazy noon-hour, Douglas slowed his steps as he approached. The man was obviously a cooper; and around one stand of staves he was deftly looping a withe hoop and locking it tight by notches in the withe. As Douglas halted he rapidly tapped the hoop down into position, gave the barrel a roll, and stopped, foxily watching the stranger.

"Howdy, stranger," he gurgled, shifting a lumpy quid in one cheek.

"Howdy. You look busy."

"Allus busy to this time o' year—folks needs barrels for the apples—keeps me a-hustlin', yessir. But lawsy, what's the use o' livin' if ye don't keep a-movin', says I. Might's well be a stump or a rock, yessir. Some folks'd ruther set and spit tobacker to a rat-hole, but not me. I'd ruther wear out than rust out—I can lay quiet a long time when I'm dead. Ain't that so?"

"Right as a trivet," the blond man heartily approved, noting the keen features and the sandy gray hair. "I'll bet you're a Scotch-Irishman. Am I right?"

"Wal! Ye hit 'er right into the eye, stranger—David McCafferty—that's me. No slow Injun blood or Dutch into me, like some folks round here—I'm awake, I am, yessir! Ye're Hammerless Hampton, o' course. Hearn all 'bout ye, oh yes."

His shrewd look dwelt a minute on the gun. Then he shot a wary glance around. His next remark came in a hoarse whisper:

"Uncle Eb told me 'bout ye. Fine old feller, Uncle Eb. Been to see him yit?"

"No. Haven't seen him since the line storm. I've been rambling around. Why?"

"Wal, go an' see him now, if ye ain't got nothin' else onto yer hands. He'd oughter be to home pretty quick—he went out bee-huntin' today early. Soon's ye see him tell him Davy says this: 'There's two strangers a-snoopin' round—come in from the Gap this mornin'—I seen 'em slide into the brush down yender by the schoolhouse, an' they ain't come back.' Jest tell him that. He'll know what I mean."

Douglas turned, looked at the road behind, let his eyes rove in the direction the strangers must have taken, and found himself looking at the wall of Dickie Barre—where Steve probably was hiding. He scowled and unconsciously shifted his gun. A subdued chuckle brought his glance back to David, who now was agrin.

"Guess ye think like I do, Hammerless," he added with a swift wink. "Anyways, if ye see Uncle Eb 'fore I do, tell him. I been hopin' he might come back along o' here, but nobody knows where he'll travel to when he gits a-goin'."

"Which is his house?"

"'Bout haff a mile 'long—on the left, beyend the second turn—yeller house facin' Dickabar—the onliest yeller house on the *left* side o' the road. G'by."

He dived at his work again, with a back jerk of the head to urge his messenger on. Douglas swung away with long strides.

At the other houses along his way faces looked out from windows as he passed and heads jutted from doorways when he had gone by, but he did not see them. His gaze ranged ahead, seeking a yellow house on the left. His thoughts were a complex of puzzlement over McCafferty's cryptic last utterances and of worriment for Steve. He did not reflect on the fact that Steve was an escaped convict; he thought of him

only as a hunted victim of the machinations of Snake Sanders and as the wild young sweetheart of Marion, and he resented the coming of men who might be human bloodhounds trailing the unlucky youth. And, though he wondered why honest Uncle Eb should need a warning of the presence of those newcomers, he dismissed the enigma with the guess that this was only a part of the "underground telegraph" system of the Traps, whereby its citizens, good or bad, learned news which might or might not concern them vitally.

Though he did not realize it, he was responding to his environment. The mysterious undercurrent of things unseen, half-guessed—of whispers and winks and silences—of secret movements in the jungly brush and the labyrinth of stones—was eddying around his straighforward nature and deflecting him into the channel where, in time, he might become an integral part of the walled-in stream of life revolving about the bowl. Whether he should ride on the surface of the stream, whether he should float below it like a submerged snag, whether he should suddenly drop to the bottom and be forever lost, only time could tell. But the current was working, and he was drifting with it unawares.

Less than a month ago, as Douglas Hampton, newspaperman, he had had a friendly nod and a smile for every blue-coated patrolman he happened to meet. In his own neighborhood he had known personally every "cop," and some of the plain-clothes "dicks" as well; and many a time in the dead hours of night, when his own work was done and policemen had little to do but patrol vacant beats, he had stood long in some shadowy corner and yarned with a lonesome guardian of the law. "A fine bunch of fellows," had been his opinion of them then. Yet now, as Hammerless Hampton, his mental reaction to the hint of the arrival of man-trackers was instinctively hostile; hostile, though he himself still was almost universally regarded as a detective. Yes, he was drifting.

But he was not to drift long. The time was close at hand when, in his own mind at least, he must align himself with or against the forces of the Law. In fact, every stride he took was narrowing the distance between him and that decision. When he turned into the little dooryard of the only yellow house on the left, he was within earshot of the growling voice of the Law. And when he tramped noisily up the steps and looked through the open door at the top he looked squarely into the eyes of the Law itself.

Beyond that door stood three men. One, his hat askew on his silvery hair, was Uncle Eb. The other two, beefy, red-faced, regarding the newcomer with cold eyes, were obviously outsiders. The civilian clothing and blunt-toed shoes, the chilled-steel stare, the untanned hands hovering on a level with the lowest buttons of their vests, the significant bump bulging the coat of the nearer man—over the right rear pocket—all told the same tale to Hampton's quick survey.

There was no guess-work about it this time. The Law was in the Traps.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CODE OF THE HILLS

STANDING there in the doorway, Douglas watched the eyes of the two strangers shift rapidly over him, taking him in from clean-shaven face to laced boots, then returning to the shotgun under his arm. With a cool nod to them, he turned to Uncle Eb—and surprized in the old man's countenance a look of mingled anxiety and hope.

"Howdy, Uncle Eb," he said casually. "Thought I'd drop in a minute and smoke a pipe. Didn't know you had company."

"Come in! Come right in, son!" The explosive voice was even more abrupt than usual. "Where ye been all the time? I been by yer house twice—stopped to see ye—but 'twas all empty-like. I was scairt the ha'nt might o' got ye. These fellers—I dunno 'em—they ain't no comp'ny o' mine. I jest got home—been bee-huntin'—found a good tree, too—bet thar's a good fifty pound o' honey into it—these fellers was jest a-comin' into the yard when I come."

The jerky sentences, the strained look, told Douglas that Uncle Eb—Uncle Eb, who had previously asserted that he had no reason to fear detectives—was nervous. Now he thought he caught a meaning flutter of one white-lashed lid and a sidewise flicker of the eyes. But he could not interpret the signal—was not even sure it was so intended. So he only nodded carelessly.

"Uh-huh. I've been rambling around, or

I'd have seen you sooner. Did you get that tobacco for me at High Falls?"

The question was a blind for the benefit of the listening pair. He had given Uncle Eb no commission to bring him more tobacco, and his present stock was more than ample. But the old man snatched instantly at the hint.

"Yas—yas, I did, boy. It's into my bedroom—I'll git it. But I dunno if I got what ye want. Ye didn't tell me what kind, so I got two. Come pick what ye want, an' I'll keep t'other for myself."

He lumbered into another room, Douglas lounging after. The two strangers made slight movements as if to follow, then remained where they were. Uncle Eb had left the door wide open, and the watchers saw that he was taking tobacco cans from the top of an old-fashioned chest of drawers: Yellow cans and blue ones.

"They're both slice-cuts," rattled the old man. "Some likes one, some wants t'other. Take yer pick."

Douglas, holding a can in each hand as if considering, knew by their lightness that no tobacco remained in them. They were old tins, saved by the thrifty hillman for any use that might occur to him. He slid a cornerwise glance at Eb.

"Or take both kinds if ye want—I've got some more." Then, hardly moving his lips, the old man breathed, "Steve in barn—go tell him hide in hay!"

Douglas repressed a start. So that was it! Uncle Eb, loyal to his people though honest in his own life, was sheltering the refugee. And he, Hampton, who previously had had only a passive hand in aiding the fugitive, now must act either to help or to outwit the heavy-handed Law standing beyond the doorway.

According to the smug dictum of all self-righteous society, his duty was plain: to inform the waiting police that an escaped convict lurked within a stone's throw. What matter if he thereby involved Uncle Eb as an accomplice? What though he tore the heart of a girl and threw a boy back into a living tomb? A convict was a convict, duly sentenced by judicial authority, and those who connived to defeat that authority must suffer the consequences. And the girl—what is a girl's grief to the Law?

Such was the code of Respectability. Confronting it was the code of the hills, which this old man was instinctively obeying; the code of natural justice, far more ancient and human than the chain-clanking machinery of legislature and court and prison: *Stand by your own!* On either side of Douglas Hampton they towered, stark and hard as the two great walls of the Traps; and he must either swing on in the Traps current or turn and fight against it.

To a worshiper of codes, the choice might have come hard. To this man it was hardly even a matter for choice. He had his own instinctive code, and backbone enough to follow it through. And now he gave no thought to the beliefs and traditions of either the great world without or the little world within the mountain bowl. He saw only the desperate face of Steve, heard only the lad's vehement denial of guilt. And he spent no time in pondering over his course.

Not more than five seconds passed between Uncle Eb's whisper and his first move. He nodded, slid the empty cans into separate pockets, and turned doorward.

"Thanks. I'll try 'em both out," he said. "Pay you the next time I see you. That all right?"

"Sure, sure, that's all right—any time, son, any time. Mebbe I'll be drivin' down your way tomorrer, or anyways the next day—I might go after the honey tomorrer. Want to set in an' eat 'fore ye go? I ain't much good of a cook, an' Marthy an' Becky ain't to home today—they went a-visitin'—but I got to fix up sumpthin' for myself, an'——"

"No, I'll be going. Had my lunch just a little while ago."

"Wal, g'by. Which way ye goin'—up back? Wal, say, do sumpthin' for me. Throw down a jag o' hay to the hoss when ye go 'long. Much 'bliged."

Douglas nearly grinned at the old man's adroitness in thus openly turning him toward the barn. But he kept his face expressionless and, with a nod both to Uncle Eb and to the silent man-hunters, loafed toward the exit. Then one of the sinister pair moved and spoke.

"Wait a minute," he commanded bruskly. "What you carryin' that gun for? This ain't huntin' season."

"No?" was the careless retort. "It's always hunting season—for foxes and other vermin."

The second bristled.

"Whatcha mean by voimin?" he growled.

Douglas turned an amused face to him.

"Hello, Brooklyn!" he laughed. "This is the foist time I've hoid that Sands-Street accent since I came up here. How's your thoist?"

The first grinned at the mimicry of his mate. The second, though he still looked truculent, blinked.

"Takes an oily boid to catch a woim up here," gibed the blond man. "But who's the woim? I haven't hoid of any squoiming around on this toif."

Whereat the first man chuckled and the second turned brick-color.

"Whatcha mean by that stuff?" he rasped. "How'd ya git the idear I was lookin'for anybody? You know too much, you do. Come on, now, I guess me and you'll have a little talk. And you can lay that gun down on the floor, see?"

Douglas laughed derisively.

"I know I can—but I won't. Just go easy, Mister Bull, and don't monkey with the works. You're talking to a big-town boy now, and that stuff doesn't go. And if you think you're disguised so that I can't spot you, think again. Those flat-foot shoes are a dead give-away, not to mention your hip-bump and your cop face."

"Yeah? Guess you're in the habit of watchin' for them things, hey? And whatcha doin' up here, my fine boid? Kind of a funny place for a big-town boy to hang out, ain't it, huh? What was the last name you went by?"

He was moving, almost imperceptibly, to get Douglas between him and his companion. The blond man foiled the attempt by taking one swift side-step and getting his back to the open doorway.

"Don't make a fool of yourself," he advised wearily. "You can't scare me that way in a year of Sundays. Just to satisfy you—though it's none of your business—I'm Hampton, of the New York *Whirl*, up here on a vacation. If you get too obstreperous, Mister Man, I can give you a lovely write-up when I get back to town—the kind that may let you out of your job. Go easy."

THE other halted where he was. The name of the *Whirl* and the thinly veiled threat coupled with it stopped him dead; for it conjured up the vision dreaded by every officer, even though he may affect to scoff at it—the possibility of being held up to scorn in the public prints. He understood now why this fellow refused to be bulldozed, why he laughed in his face—he was "one of them newspaper guys," than whom there is no more nervy and disrespectful tribe on earth; whose friendship is worth much to any police officer, and whose enmity is not to be lightly incurred. Naturally, he did not know that Hampton was no longer connected with newspaperdom.

"You on the *Whoil?*" he growled, a crafty light in his eyes. "Who's city editor there now?"

"Chapman, of course. Same old grouch he always was, too."

The other nodded grudgingly. He had to believe now. City Editor Chapman was known far and wide in both newspaper and police circles for his uncanny news ability and his vitriolic temper. This fellow's knowledge of Chapman and his impudent assurance carried conviction.

"All right, Hampton. Guess you're O. K. Know this fella?"

He nodded toward Uncle Eb.

"Sure. He's as honest as they make 'em. What are you fellows in here for? Got anything good?"

"Nope—nothin' you'd want," was the hasty cover-up. "I ain't woikin' in the big town now—this is a little up-river stuff. Me and my pal's jest lookin' round for some small-fry. Don't let us keep ya. So long."

Douglas laughed openly. The burly man now was even more anxious to be rid of him than he was to go to the barn.

"Oh, all right. Let's see, who did you say you were? And from where?"

"Didn't say. So long, fella. So long."

He turned his back squarely on his questioner. The other man, who had been searchingly watching Douglas, now directed his gaze elsewhere and also turned an aloof shoulder to him. Douglas shot a wink at Uncle Eb and strolled out.

"G'by, son," called the old man. "Don't forgit the hoss."

"Oh, sure. I'll fix him up. See you later."

With lazy step he sauntered up to the little yellow barn, whose sliding door stood open a few inches. Once inside, he dropped his languid air in a flash.

"Steve!" he called softly, peering around. "Steve!"

No answer came. In a dark stall a horse moved and stamped. Somewhere down below sounded the grunts of hogs which had heard his steps. But of human movement, of human voice, there was no sign.

"Steve!" he whispered loudly. "Where are you? Get into the hay! Quick!"

Again there was no sound. But movement came. Under a stair-flight leading aloft in the dimmest corner, something slipped cautiously into sight—first an ear, then a cheek, then a peeping eye. It hung there, waist-high, watching the man go squinting into the stalls and around him.

"Steve! This is Hamp! Uncle Eb says——"

"Awright!"

The whispered reply, hoarse and penetrating, cut short his speech and turned him stairward. The eye became two, and the face rose as if the concealed youth were getting up from his knees.

"What's he say?" demanded Steve.

"Get into the hay! Two bulls are here—in the house—may come here any minute—get under cover quick."

"Uh-huh." Steve darted forth. "I seen 'em. Figgered I better hide into this 'ere hole an' mebbe duck out if they went up 'bove. Would of skipped outen here, but the side house-winder looks right to the barn, an' I s'picioned they'd see me."

He was already on his way upward. Douglas followed close behind. They emerged into a small hay-loft, crammed with the season's crop of horse-fodder. At each end, high up in the peak but now level with the piled hay, a small window let in light. In that light the two stood an instant looking at each other.

Though the desperate look of the hunted still was on the fugitive's face, he looked far better than when Douglas had carried him into the den among the boulders. Then he had been wan, pinched, utterly exhausted. Now his cheeks were more full, his eyes unrimmed by blue crescents, his swarthy skin tinged by healthy color. Food and sleep in plenty had transformed him from a hatchet-faced wreck to a not unhandsome young man. But the hard set of the mouth and the glitter of the dark eyes still were there.

"I'll never go back!" he whispered fiercely. "I had three years o' misery—for a job I never done—an' them dicks wun't git me back. I'll kill 'em—I'll git shot—I'll jump offen the ledges an' bust my neck—anythin'—but I ain't a-goin' back! An' I got to git Snake 'fore anybody gits me. I— *Shuh!* What's that? They comin'?"

He bounded up on the great mound and peered out. Douglas flashed a glance around. His eyes halted on the other window—the rear one. It was open.

"They're a-comin'! They're a-goin' to look round into here! I got to git under!"

Outside sounded Uncle Eb's loud voice, angrily protesting against search of his premises. The two man-trailers were stonily silent.

"No!" decided Douglas. "If they're suspicious they'll look in the hay. You get outside! Through that window—I'll steady you—swing up over the eaves and hug the roof. And lie quiet!"

Steve, with the ruthless Law almost upon him, blindly obeyed. Across to the rear window they plunged over the hay. The boy wriggled through the opening, turned his face inward, reached for the eaves above. Douglas braced himself, grasped the bare ankles, heaved upward. A clawing sound above—a spasmodic kick—a squirming struggle—the legs broke free and vanished. Followed a soft bump or two, a short scraping sound—and silence.

"I tell ye, ye ain't got no right into my place without a search warrant!" stormed Uncle Eb below. "I ain't got nothin' to hide, but I got the same rights any other honest man's got. Show yer warrant! I forbid ye into this place!"

"Ah, call in yer lawyer and we'll talk to him," sounded the sneering answer. "Go sit down and hold yer head. We won't damage nothin'. Looks bad, too, you gittin' so woiked up when you got nothin' to hide. Hey, Ward?"

Douglas reached down and rapidly loosened the lacing of one boot. Then he went back across the hay and sat down. At once a heavy foot sounded on the stairs.

"Hey, up there! You, Hampton?"

"Right both times—there's hay up here, and I'm Hampton," drawled the man above.

"Huh! Bill, go up and take a look. I'll see that nothin' slides out down here."

The red face of Bill, ex-Brooklynite, rose above the floor, glowering around.

"Well, whatcha doin', Hampton?" he growled. "Thought ya was feedin' the

horse, but I notice he ain't fed yet. Slow, ain't ya?"

"Oh, I take my time. And right now I'm straightening up my sock. Ever have a sock wrinkle under your heel? Makes a beautiful blister. Horses can wait until my foot is fixed to suit me."

Red-Face grunted and keenly surveyed the mow. Douglas coolly laced up the boot, as if completing what he had been doing when interrupted; stretched his leg, worked his foot up and down, and nodded as if satisfied.

"That feels better," he announced. "Well, Statue of Liberty, what's all the heavy thinking about? Or are you only trying to look wise and pretending to think?"

The other's heavy mouth twisted in an ugly grin. He reached for a pitchfork standing near, yanked it free from the hay, inspected its long gleaming tines.

"Funny as a toothache, ain't ya! One of these days, fella, that mouth o' yourn'll git ya into a box," he predicted. "Right now I got other things to poke into. Jest come down off that hay—unless you're coverin' somethin' up. That's right. Ya mind like ma's angel-face, don't ya? Now watch what I toin up!"

With a leap he came up. And with a shrewd jab he drove the fork down into the hay on which Douglas had been sitting.

CHAPTER XIV

COLD NERVE

AGAIN and again the man-hunter stabbed at the hay, moving about with each new attack, lunging more viciously as his searching prods brought no result. Douglas felt a little chilly as he visualized what might have happened if Uncle Eb's advice had not been disregarded at the last minute. And the old man down below, hearing the loud rustle of the dried grass and knowing nothing of the change in Steve's place of refuge, lost his grip on himself.

With a yell he came thundering up the stairs, his walrus mustache bristling like tusks and his jaw jutting as if about to bite.

"*Git* offen that hay!" he bellowed. "*Git* outen here! An' git quick, 'fore I muckle onto ye. I'll sling ye head-fust outen the winder! *Git!*"

The man above had jumped about and swung the fork menacingly before him. Infuriated still further by the sight of his own hay-tool turned against him, the old warrior sprang up the sloping side of the mow, panting inarticulate threats. But he collided with Douglas, who slid down at him and clinched.

"Hold your horses, Uncle Eb!" he exhorted. "He's not hurting the hay or smoking in it—only jabbing the fork into it, for some reason or other. Let him fool around. Whoa! Quiet down!"

But Eb's blood was up, and he knew no reason why he should quiet down. He fought to break free, and the younger man found his hands very full. Tussling mightily, they reeled about at the foot of the slope, in imminent danger of slipping over the edge of the open gap in the floor and crashing down the steep stairs. The man Ward, who had bounded part-way up to aid his companion if necessary, took one look and hastily got from under. His mate Bill, still holding the fork poised for defense, grinned nastily at the grappling pair.

Douglas got his chin on Eb's shoulder and ventured a whisper from the corner of his mouth.

"It's all right. He's not there."

It took some seconds for his meaning to penetrate the old fellow's raging brain, but Douglas managed to hold him until he understood. Then all at once he ceased struggling. Too, he quick-wittedly gave a deceptive excuse for his outbreak.

"Fellers come into here—actin' like they was the King o' Rooshia an' I was a dawg," he panted. "Ain't got no search warrant—they think they can sass me right into my own house—tromp onto my hay an' spile it for the hosses—they got to git out!"

"That's right, too," Douglas nodded. "I know how you feel. But the best way is to let the smart-Alecks show themselves that they're wrong—and then, if they don't apologize, report them to the right authorities. I can tell you where to send the report."

At that Bill glowered anew. He glowered still more when Douglas turned to him with sarcastic permission to continue.

"You, up there, go on amusing yourself if you like. Mr. Wilham here will take his amusement later—when you're trying to explain to your superiors why you took it on yourselves to molest a peaceable citizen.

Maybe he'll get more fun out of it in the long run than you will. So go ahead playing hay-maker—it's a nice game for little boys. When you get through, bring down a forkful for the horse. It'll save me the trouble."

Bill's mouth became a thin line. He looked as if about to heave the fork at his tormenter. But after one long glare he doggedly returned to his search, speaking not a word. Had any fugitive been under that hay now, however, he would undoubtedly have died under the vindictive lunges of the fork.

Foot by foot he bayoneted the mow, from end to end and from side to side. Douglas watched with a tantalizing grin, Uncle Eb in silent perturbation—wondering where Steve was but not daring to ask by word or look. From above came no sound. Steve was lying quiet as the dead.

In Hampton's mind grew a big suspicion. These men were conducting themselves as if acting on previous information; as if told by some one that here they would find what they sought. It was preposterous to suppose that they would go thus through the entire Traps, jabbing every hay-loft, riding rough-shod over every man's right to call his home his castle. They had come in only that morning, gone up toward the boulders—and then come to the one place where the refugee was. It might be blind chance, but—yes, Douglas was suspicious.

Finally the man Bill, with an oath, threw down the fork. His face was redder than ever, streaked with sweat, itching from hay-dust. He mopped a hand over his prickly cheeks, scratched his head violently, bent a baleful glare on the two below. Then he came wallowing out of the ragged mass he had stirred up

"Say, bring along that horse-feed, will you? We've been waiting long enough," complained Douglas.

As if in emphasis, an impatient whinny sounded below.

Another oath exploded from the badgered Bill. He slid clumsily down and stood looking as if aching to punch the grinning mouth. But he did not punch. Swallowing something, he pointed downward.

"Git down-stairs!" he rasped. "You, Hampton, ya got in here foist, but ya'll stay where I can see ya from now on. G'wan! Move!"

The blue eyes narrowed at the dictatorial tone and the half-spoken accusation. But then Douglas smiled again—an exasperating smile.

"*When* I've fed the horse," he singsonged. "*Then*, if I feel like it. But there, Uncle Eb, maybe you'd better do the feeding, now that you're here. If I laid this gun down I might lose it. Some folks can't be trusted."

UNCLE EB cackled harshly. Bill moved his right arm quickly, but stopped it. Douglas still smiled, but his eyes were cold and his gun gripped in a ready-looking fist. Ward, whose head had risen again on the stairs, watched like a cat, one hand under his coat.

Deliberately Uncle Eb gathered a big armful of hay, crowded past Bill with it, dropped it on the open chute to the horse's bin and stuffed it down with a small two-tined fork standing at hand. Then he returned to the stairs and clumped down them, Ward giving way but holding his position.

"After you, my dear Bill," bowed Douglas. "On, don't be afraid. The *Whirl* may jump on your neck one of these days, but not this afternoon. G'wan!"

At the patrolman-like twang of the last word Ward grinned slightly. He evidently had a sense of humor. Bill looked at him, at Douglas—then trod to the stairs and down. Douglas followed.

Below, the pair conducted a rapid but extremely thorough search of the ground floor. Meal-chests, barrels, stalls, the covert under the stairs—every nook and corner where a man could possibly be hidden was looked into. When they still found no sign of what they sought, they paused and looked hard at each other.

"Any cellar under here?" demanded Ward.

"If ye call a hawg-pen a cellar, yas," snapped Uncle Eb. "Go look into it—waller round into it—ask the hawgs what they had for breakfas'—wait awhile an' mebbe I'll feed ye some swill along with 'em."

"Say, whatcha mean by that?" snarled Bill.

"I mean ye was brought up into a hawg-pen an' that's where ye belong!" flared Eb. "That plain 'nough for ye?"

It was. Bill started for the old man. But Douglas stepped between them. He

said nothing; he only looked. Bill liked the look so ill that he slowed, then stopped.

"An' after ye've shook hands with yer brothers ye can come an' go all over the house, like ye was goin' to when ye got s'picious an' follered Hampton down here," jeered Eb. "I don't let pigs into my house as a gin'ral thing, but——"

"That'll be about enough of that!" Ward broke in. "Keep a civil tongue in your head."

"But this once, I'll do it, seein' ye've gone so fur now," Uncle Eb continued, ignoring him. "I can air out the house when ye're gone. Hurry up now. Look under the beds an' into the oven an' all—an' then git offen my land an' stay off!"

The two looked keenly at him for a full half-minute.

"Since you're so willing, we won't," announced Ward.

Bill nodded sulkily, looking again around the barn. Ward rubbed his jowl and spat on the floor.

"What d'you make of it, Bill?" he puzzled.

"Somebody lied!" was the morose answer.

"Yeah. Looks like it. Well, let's travel."

Douglas, shrewdly watching, loosed a snap shot —

"Don't you fellows know any better than to believe Sanders?"

The slight start, the involuntary flicker of the eyelids, told him that his shot had scored.

"Uh—whatcha mean? We ain't seen Sanders," blurted Bill.

"No? I notice that you know his name, though. How much did he shake you down for? You'd better get it back, quick."

The pair scowled at each other. Bill, with a growl, started for the door. Ward halted him.

"Hold up, Bill. No hurry," he said. "What about Sanders, Hampton?"

"Only this much: Folks around here think I'm a detective. Sanders thought so too. He offered to get me any man I wanted—for half the reward. If the man wasn't here, he offered to sell me some fellow who hadn't done anything but who could be railroaded—for the right price. He bragged that he could sell anybody, and that he'd done that kind of business before. Does that line of talk sound familiar?"

The scowls grew deeper.

"Some of it," Ward admitted. "Not the railroad part of it, but—some of it. Well, say, Hampton, I'm sure obliged to you for that. Sell anybody, eh? That means the fellow he's dealing with, too. Uh-huh. Bill, let's you and me take a walk."

Bill, with another growl, started forward again. But Douglas was not yet through.

"Aren't you forgetting something?" he asked pointedly, moving his head toward Uncle Eb.

"That's right," Ward acknowledged. "I'm sorry, Mr.—uh—Williams—Wilson——"

"Wilham!" barked Eb. "I ain't got nothin' agin *you*. It's this here hawg." His frosty eyes glinted at the offensive Bill.

"How about it, Bill?" queried Ward, his tongue in his cheek.

Bill turned sourly, heavy jaw set. But he attempted amends.

"Sorry, old fella," he mumbled. "We got a bad steer. We ain't hoit ya, have we? We gotta do our dooty. We—uh——"

"All right, let it go at that," Douglas interposed.

All four moved out of the barn. As they emerged, Douglas began speaking a little louder, so that Steve could hear. And, to keep the pair from glancing back and perhaps seeing what was on the roof, he walked toward the house, talking over one shoulder.

"If you want to find Sanders, you'd better go straight down the road and hunt his house. He'll probably be there at mealtime, if not before. Where does he live, Uncle Eb?"

"Way over t'other side, not sech a long ways from the Gap," Eb answered readily. "He comes an' goes by cross-cuts, but ye better stick to the road. Ye turn into the Clove road down past the schoolhouse, keep on till ye've crossed the crick twice—it sorter wanders round, an' ther's bridges acrost—an' then ther's a kind of a wood-road bearin' off to yer right. Go up that an' ye'll find Snake's house. Ye'll be 'bout the onliest comp'ny thar. Nobody visits much with Snake."

They were turning into the dooryard before the house now, Bill and Ward morosely eyeing the road and trying to fix in mind the unfamiliar turns as described by Unkle Eb. Douglas stole a glance beyond them. One side of the barn roof was in plain sight now. And on that side, a quarter of the way down, was Steve.

Hugging the shingles, he was craftily working eavesward from the ridge to which he had clung. With bare toes and flattened hands holding him from too sudden a slip down the pitch, he was sliding himself lower and lower on his stomach. When he should reach the eaves, it would be only a matter of a short drop to the ground and a quick jump around the corner, and he would be out of sight. But if his pursuers should happen to look that way now——

"Look here," Douglas said quickly, stooping and tracing a line with his gun-butt, "here's the road. Now you go down this way, and then——"

Moving the weapon, keeping his eyes glued to his crude map, he talked on, holding their attention. They followed every move. And behind them the ragged figure on the barn roof descended until its feet hung out over the eaves. There it hesitated an instant, balancing itself for the final slip and drop.

Douglas dared not look. Playing for time, he appealed to Uncle Eb for information regarding some fictitious road which might branch off before the right one should be reached. Eb's eyes were crinkled with amusement, for he saw that the younger man was inventing most of his road-map; but he kept his face straight, disputed a couple of turns, and put down a gnarled finger to make a new section of the course.

Bill began to stir impatiently. His eyes wandered.

"Yeah, we'll git there," he broke in. "Come on, Ward."

"When you get there look out for snakes!" warned Douglas, striking for his wandering attention. He got it. Bill faced him again.

"Snakes! Whatcha mean?"

"Sanders has a fondness for snakes—bad ones. He may have a few around where you can step on them. Keep your eyes peeled."

At that moment sounded a soft thump at the side of the barn. Ward started to turn.

"Copperheads—rattlers—poisonous!" asserted Douglas loudly. "Watch out for 'em!"

Ward's eyes hung on his a couple of seconds longer, held by the warning. Then he turned and looked toward the barn.

"What's that bump?" he muttered.

"Horse moving around, or a hog down below. Don't forget those snakes."

Then Douglas looked. Only the old barn met his anxious gaze. Ward, after a speculative glance around, nodded and started away.

"All right. See you later, maybe. So long."

Followed by Bill, he stepped briskly to the road. Along the lumpy wheel-ruts in the sand they trudged, their voices floating back in growling tones that boded ill for somebody. Then the roadside brush-growth blotted out their receding figures, and the only sound was the cheerful chorus of the crickets in the grass.

CHAPTER XV

FIRE AND FROST

DOUGLAS took a long breath. Uncle Eb swung to him.

"Wha'd ye do with him?" he hoarsely asked.

In guarded tones Douglas outlined the ruse which had saved Steve. As he finished he strode out to the side of the road and looked down it. The two man-hunters still were in sight, plodding along without a backward look.

"By mighty! Ye've got a head onto ye like a tack, son," congratulated Eb, who had followed. "Right after I told them fellers to look into the hawg-pen I nigh got a shock—it come to me ye might of hid the boy into thar. Thank Gawd ye was here—I dunno what I'd done without ye——"

"All right. Now listen. You go back and get Steve under cover again quick. Those fellows may not be so well convinced as they seem to be, and they might double back after they're out of sight. I'm going to follow them up now and see if they keep on going. I'll be back."

As he spoke, Bill and Ward faded from sight around a little curve. He strode away after them. Uncle Eb hastened to the barn.

Along the straight open stretch of road—perhaps forty yards from house to curve—Douglas traveled at a half-lope. As he went, a smile grew on his mouth, culminating in a chuckle.

"Hammerless Hampton, you're an obstructionist, a conspirator against the majesty of the law, a disreputable character

all around," he told himself. "And sooner or later—probably sooner—you're going to get yourself in bad. When Brooklyn Bill gets back to the river, for instance, he may query New York and learn that you're disowned by the *Whirl*, and so on. And then what?"

Instead of growing serious at the thought of that possibility, however, he laughed all the more as he imagined Bill's lurid language on learning that he had been duped. He was still laughing when he reached the bend. But there, in one instant, his face froze.

A few rods farther on stood the pair of officers. Their backs were toward him, their shoulders touched, their burly bodies blocked the narrow way. Beyond their legs showed a skirt.

The skirt was jerking about, and under it bare ankles moved quickly, as if the woman or girl were struggling to get away. The shoulders of one of the men, too, moved as if his hands were gripping an active prisoner. Then the men swung apart an instant, and in the space between them gleamed sunlit red hair.

Douglas bounded forward, his feet making little noise in the soft sand. Before the intent couple heard him he was upon them. Straight between them he plunged, shoving them violently asunder. From the girl broke a cry. She was Marion, and both her wrists were clutched in the heavy fists of Bill.

"Hey! Ya big bum, whatcha doin'?" Bill blared furiously.

Ward's face too was dark with anger over the thump he had received, and one hand hung menacingly at his hip.

"I'll show you mighty sudden what I'm doing! Let her go!"

Bill released the girl— but not in obedience to the command. He did it because he wanted to use his hands on Douglas more than on her. Ugly-jawed, he stepped forward.

Douglas stepped back, handed his gun to Marion, and fronted Bill with fists poised for the first parry and counter-punch. Marion sprang aside, face ablaze with wrath, gun up. Ward, seeing Douglas give up the weapon to her and stand bare-handed, relaxed from his tense poise and swiftly grew cool.

BILL shot a vicious punch at the blond man's chin—a straight drive which would have downed his man if it had landed. But Douglas ducked to the left and snapped a retaliating right for the beefy jaw. It halted short—his wrist caught and held by Ward. Now Ward yanked him back.

"Two to one, eh?" raged Douglas. "All right——"

"No!" clipped Ward.

Gripping the blond man's arms, he swung himself between the antagonists.

"Let up! Same goes for you, Bill! Cut it!"

With a powerful shove he sent Douglas staggering backward, at the same time releasing his hold.

"That'll be about all!" he snapped. "Drop this where it is."

"I'm not dropping it!" panted Douglas. "Manhandling girls may get by down where you come from, but it doesn't go with me. Officers? Pah! You cheap thugs——"

"That'll do!" Ward repeated. "You listen to me a minute."

His steady gaze, his resolute tone, his quiet authority, had their effect. Despite himself, Douglas respected the man. He stood still.

"I ain't blamin' you," Ward continued evenly. "You act like a man. But the girl brought it on herself—and she ain't hurt a bit. Bill oughtn't have grabbed her, maybe, but that's his way. I don't like it myself—him and me have had words about that kind of stuff before—but the girl ain't hurt and she wouldn't be hurt, whether you butted in or not. We only asked her somethin' about the road, and she sassed us and tried to shove Bill off into the ditch. He grabbed her hands and told her to learn some manners, and then she tried to fight him, so naturally he hung onto her. That's all there is to it. I'd drop it, if I was you."

Douglas looked at her. True enough, she showed no sign of hurt, except perhaps to her vivid temper. Ward's straightforward manner was convincing. So were the memories of his own denunciation by the girl on the night when he met her and of her fiery fight that morning to regain her sketch. And so were the words of Marion herself.

"You big hog!" she flared, holding the gun pointed at Bill as if aching to use it. "You better git outen the Traps and stay out! My manners are good enough

for me and my folks, and if you wasn't brought up to give other folks half of the road you can't learn me anything. You keep on actin' like you started, and somebody'll shoot some manners into *you*, I shouldn't wonder. I've got a good mind to do it my own self!"

Under the lash of her tongue, the blaze of her eyes, and the menace of the twin muzzles yawning at his midriff, Bill blinked rapidly and stepped backward. Ward, too, looked uneasy—for an angry woman and a gun make a decidedly dangerous combination; the more so, because the woman may shoot without actually realizing what she is doing.

"That gun loaded?" he muttered to Douglas.

"Sure. But the safety's on and she doesn't know the mechanism. Of course, she might accidentally slip it, and then—your pal wouldn't look very good. I'd advise you two to make tracks down the road and keep on making them. And one word more to you, Ward. You talk straight, and I'll let this drop for now; but you'd better pick another running-mate before you go again among hill-people. This man might do as a Bowery cop or a prison guard, but he's no good in wildcat country."

Ward nodded about a quarter of an inch, as if he agreed, and studied his mate with a slightly disgusted look. Then he shrewdly appraised the girl behind the gun. When he spoke again there was a little twinkle of admiration in his eye.

"Wildcat country's right. Don't blame you for hangin' around this neck of the woods, Hampton. Don't blame you a-tall. Well, so long. Bill!"

The last word crackled. Bill, still edging away from the gaping muzzles, obeyed Ward's thumb-jerk along the road. Passing Douglas, he paused to glower hatefully into the slitted blue eyes watching him. Then he shuffled onward.

Not until they had rounded another turn did Douglas take his unswerving gaze from their backs. Then, as he relaxed, he realized that Ward had shown no suspicion over his sudden appearance; recalled, too, the twinkle and the parting remarks. The man had thought he and Marion had a tryst. Could he have looked back through the trees, however, and studied the girl, he would have begun to wonder.

Douglas, too, wondered as he looked at her. The snap of anger had vanished from her eyes, the flush from her cheeks, the girlishness from her figure. The gray orbs watching him now were cold as ice—ice with a smoldering flame far below its surface. Her face and her poise were as stony as any upright boulder standing under Dickie Barre. From one hand hung his gun, its muzzles now buried in the sand. Straight, forbidding, she stood looking fixedly at him. And, though he was not expecting any thanks for what he had done, he stood staring blankly back at her. This was a girl whom he never had seen before.

"Well! What's wrong?" he puzzled. "Seems to be a sudden frost."

Unspeaking, she lifted the gun and held it toward him. He took it, peered at it as if seeking on it the cause of her hauteur, looked up and found her turning away. She took half a dozen steps toward the Wilham home, straight as an Indian, proud as a princess, before he moved. Then he began striding after her. At once she stopped.

"Thought you was goin' the other way," she said pointedly.

"Did you? Well, I'm going this way now."

"I'd ruther you'd go on to where you started for."

His mouth tightened a little.

"I would," he coolly informed her, "but I told Uncle Eb I'd come back."

"Oh. Then I'll wait. Go 'long."

Again he stared. As before, she met him eye to eye, cold and uncompromising.

"What's wrong, Marion?" he repeated. "I don't understand."

"Don't you? I should think you might, if you'd think back a little ways. Now I don't want to walk with you."

His chin lifted.

"Oh. I see. It's Steve. All right. But if he's still at Uncle Eb's I'll tell him you're coming. I won't be there long."

She started.

"No—what—how'd you know he's—what you got to do with Steve?"

"Ask Steve. He'll tell you all about it. Good day."

With that he was off. She stood motionless, watching his receding shoulders, her head lifted at the same proud angle. But, as he disappeared around the curve from which he had sprung to her rescue, that haughty head slowly drooped. She set

her teeth into one red lip. The clear gray eyes became blurred with tears.

Beyond the curve, Douglas stalked rapidly on. Into the Wilham yard he marched with never a backward glance, and, after a quick look toward the barn, up into the open doorway of the house. Uncle Eb, cheek bulging with a chunk of bread and cheese, nodded to him from the table where he was devouring his belated cold lunch.

"Shet the door," he suggested. Douglas closed it. "Them fellers gone?"

"They're on their way. They're sore at each other now, as well as at Sanders. Where's our friend?"

"Down cellar. Ther's a winder he can git out by if he has to. What's them fellers mad 'bout now?"

Douglas briefly told him. Uncle Eb stopped chewing, looked at him keenly, cackled out all at once, then wondered—

"Why didn't Marry come 'long with ye?"

"I don't know. Said she didn't want to walk with me. So I jest walked right 'long by my own self."

The old man looked quizzically at him, then cackled again.

"Ye're a-gittin' to talk like ye b'longed into the Traps," he chuckled. "An' after what ye done this afternoon, boy, ye do b'long! 'Most anybody with the right kind of a heart round here would a-helped that pore misfortunit boy, but 'tain't every feller from outside, like you, would a-done it. An' that Marry gal—she prob'ly thinks ye're a detective, like the rest. She'll soon know dif'rent."

"Never mind. But now, Uncle Eb, I don't like to ask questions that don't concern me, but just what did Steve do that sent him to the pen?"

Uncle Eb hesitated, chewed hard, swallowed, and gulped a noisy drink of cold coffee.

"The wust thing into the world, son—he got caught. He never done no harm, but gittin' caught for a thing is 'nough, whether ye done it or not. S'posin' we let him talk for hisself."

He stamped twice on the floor. A couple of minutes later a door silently opened and Steve stepped up from the cellar stairs. After one glance he leaped to Douglas' side and gripped his hand.

"Hamp!" he gulped. "Ye're a white man! I ain't a-goin' to forgit this. Jest wait till I git my chance to pay ye some way——"

"Oh, forget it! Man alive, I don't want any pay. If you owe anything to anybody it's to Uncle Eb, not to me. I just blundered in and had a lot of fun with those fellows. Uncle Eb's the one to thank."

"I ain't a-forgittin' Uncle Eb—he knows it. But the way ye took holt——"

"All right, all right, let it slide. But now, if you don't mind telling me, what's it all about? What are those fellows after you for? Don't tell me if you don't want to."

"Why, don't ye know? Wal, if that ain't— Ye jest went ahead an' helped me anyways, huh? My ——! I didn't s'pose there was sech folks into the world.

"It's this way, Hamp. We pick a lot o' berries round here into the Summer—not right here into the Traps, but 'way over to Long Pond an' miles an' miles further 'long the mountains—an' sell 'em to dealers. An' other fellers come from down b'low to do the same—it'd take a hull army to pick 'em all, they're so thick. Some o' them fellers are pretty hard. An' when some of us folks from here was pickin' round Three-Mile Post, I fit with the Bump boys—three of 'em, brothers, that lived down 'bout a mile outside o' the Wall over yender, onto the road to Paltz.

"Wal, they licked me—three of 'em all bigger'n me. They licked me bad. Course, I was crazy mad, an' I swore I'd come down outen the Traps some day an' buckshoot 'em an' burn their house an' I dunno what all. But there was four weeks more o' pickin', an' the Bumps went somewheres else, an' I got cooled off, an' by the time I got back here to the Traps I'd made up my mind to leave 'em 'lone. An' I did.

"Wal, it run 'long awhile, an' huntin' season come, an' then one night Snake Sanders got me full o' licker an' says we'll go down b'low an' git us some coons—he knowed where we could git a passel of 'em. I'd oughter knowed better'n to go anywheres with him, but I was fool 'nough to go 'long, an' he gimme more licker, an' we tromped an' tromped, an' I had more licker, an' so on. An' then, fust thing I knowed, we was nigh a house an' barn, an' our coon-dog warn't nowheres round, an' I was gittin' awful drunk. An' Snake says, 'Lay down awhile an' ye'll feel better.' An' I laid down.

"Then, next I knowed, my gun blew off—

bung bung!—an' men was runnin' an' hosses screechin' an' the barn was all afire, a-flarin' out all round so 'twas light as day. An' Snake was gone, an' all to once I see 'twas the Bump place that was afire, an' somethin' told me to git. So I run as fast as ever I could, never takin' my gun or nothin'. But bimeby I was way up the road, an' it was all dark, an' I got tired an' set down to rest. An' then the licker got a-holt o' me an' I went off to sleep.

"Wal, that was the end o' me. They found me a-layin' into the road an' they pounded me 'most to death an' drug me out an' tried me for arson an' 'tempted murder an' I dunno what all. I didn't have no more chance than a baby chipmunk into a hawk's nest. I couldn't prove nothin', and they wouldn't b'lieve nothin', an' they got proof o' what I'd swore to do to them Bumps, an'—they gimme the limit.

"An' these three years I been doin' time an' gittin' knocked round an'—oh Gawd! An' Snake, he's been a-settin' up here laffin' at me an' the Bumps—he was agin 'em, I dunno what for, an' he used me to git all the blame for burnin' up their place an' their hosses, an' pigs an' shootin' Charlie Bump—Charlie he got buckshot into him an' the hull place was burnt—an' I got the limit—but I'll git him—I'll git him——"

He was growing incoherent, his eyes glazing with concentrated hate and fury. Douglas thumped him repeatedly on the shoulder and broke in on his talk.

"All right, Steve, all right! Buck up, now! Your turn's coming—take a grip on yourself! Keep your head until those bulls leave, and lie low."

The youth gritted his teeth and swallowed hard.

"I'm a-layin' low," he asserted hoarsely. "I'm a-keepin' my head an' my grip. I ain't a-goin' back to no pen. But when oncet I git to a gun——"

He swallowed again and pawed with one lean hand at his throat. Douglas nodded, his own face somber. Uncle Eb cleared his throat like a gunshot.

"I don't hold with shootin' yer enemies," he erupted. "I never yit shot at a man, an' I don't b'lieve into it. Still an' all, I dunno as I blame ye much. But ye got to lay lower than ever now, an' lay somewheres else. Snake sent them fellers here—they as good as said so—an' they'll be back, I bet. Come dark, I'll take ye over into the rocks. I got some old clo'es an' a hoss-blankit ye can wrop up into, an' I'll send ye food right 'long reg'lar if Marry'll take it—she's spryer than I be."

"And I'll be going now," Douglas added. "I'm keeping her waiting. She's down the road, Steve—wouldn't walk with me. Take care of yourself—and of her. So long."

Before Steve or Uncle Eb could reply he was out of the house. Across the road he went, pausing a moment to beckon to the stubborn little red-haired figure which now, walking very slowly, was approaching from the curve. She made no answering signal, gave no sign that she saw him. Climbing over the stone wall beyond, he marched away across-lots, face set stiffly toward the frowning wall of Dickie Barre and the invisible Clove Road.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MOVING FINGER WRITES

ONE by one the October days and nights stole in from the nebulous realm of Tomorrow and, like pearls magically taking form on an enchanted thread of gold, added themselves to the memory-gems of Yesterday. Each morning found a new jewel vaguely appearing out of the wan dawn-light; every passing hour imperceptibly shaped the growing form; each rising moon looked down on the completely rounded treasure, nestling beside its mates which had come before. No two were quite alike, for each was tinted with its own delicate hues—the flush of a rosy sunrise, the blue of the sky and the gray of the clouds, the leaden tinge of rain, the somber shadows of dusk, the brilliant gleams of the stars. Yet no one of them was all sufficient; it was the blending, the intermingling, of all of them that produced, or would produce, the perfect circle.

And as the unseen hand of their Maker placed on each its own peculiar tints, so the gentle fingers of Mother Nature also worked unceasingly on the mantle she had worn since the spring-time, weaving into its monotone new and ever-changing touches of color. This was her play-day, this season between the Summer and the snow; and with scarlet and crimson, with yellow and cream, with the palest of green and the rustiest brown, she transformed her emerald cloak into a gay robe on which the dusky

evergreens, hitherto merged into the sweeping expanse of verdure, now stood out bold and clear. Too, by night she painted dingy house-roofs and rickety wagons and all the other ugly man-made things—painted them gray-white with frost, which the new sun quickly blackened and sent creeping down the shingles to drip gently from the eaves of a morning. And as that sun mounted the Wall and rolled its warmth over into the Traps below, she coyly loosed white clouds of mist to go drifting along over the new colors she had made in the dark hours, presently to draw them aside and reveal to human eyes the glory of her handiwork.

Yet it was love's labor lost, this wondrous wizardry of hers—or almost lost. Of all the eyes which daily opened in the Traps, few gave more than a casual glance to all the enchantment wrought around them. Most of those eyes turned inward upon the stomachs of their owners, seeing only the "pannicakes" and gravy, the "buttermilk-pop" and other components of breakfast; or they looked at pigs and hens and cows. Few indeed were those who lifted up their thoughts to the gorgeous hills surrounding them, and fewer still those who, glimpsing what lay before them, were moved to admire for even a passing minute. In the flaming woods they visioned only animals and birds to be killed, millstones to be rifted, hardwood to be "mined" into charcoal, hoops to be shaved, and secret coverts where nameless industry might be carried on in stealth.

But there were two in the Traps who saw. At their doorways in the morning they looked long at the limited sections of the panorama which were visible from their respective abodes—noting the added touches of color laid on during the silent hours of sleep. Through the day, as they traversed the byways on self-imposed missions, they paused often to gaze at some striking bit of natural beauty near at hand or to dwell upon the vistas opening out around them, at some higher point. In the twilight they sat somewhere in silent solitude, watching the deepening of the dusk and the shy appearance of the first night stars in the darkening blue. These two were a blond-haired man and a red-haired girl, who lived in little houses on the road leading to the Clove.

Yet, though they looked on the same things, though their souls were lifted up in the same way, though they dwelt not far apart and their minds turned toward each other many a time as the tinted days glided away, they saw nothing of each other. The little bare feet and the sturdy booted feet never turned into the same path. They came and went, they paused and passed on, they traveled open road and faint trail—but never together. Between them stood a wall—a cold, stony, stubborn wall which had suddenly thrust itself up out of the ground as if conjured by the wand of an old-time magician. And on that side of the wall facing the man were graven words spoken by the girl—

"I don't want to walk with you."

On the other side—the side which the girl saw—the wall bore other words; malicious words, evil words, which yet had the ring of truth: words spoken not by the man, but about the man, by others. And beside those words burned a picture which made her writhe and set her teeth into a red lip—a picture of herself held unresisting in that man's arms, beside the plashing Coxing Kill. And atop that wall, leering down at both of them alike, squatted the ugly little demon who has wrecked many a life and will wreck many more: Pride.

But for the presence of that malevolent imp, with his taunting grin and his hissing repetition of the rankling words, either of these two could have walked straight through that wall. But there he perched by day and by night, his claw-like fingers pointing ever downward at the unfading words and picture, his sneering grimace repelling them from taking the first step toward each other. So, instead of moving toward the barrier, each turned from it and traveled along it or away from it—the girl traversing her own chosen paths toward Dickie Barre, the home of Uncle Eb, the upper reaches of Coxing Kill; the man roving along the slopes of Mohonk, sitting for hours on the brink of the Wall, or circling westward around the Clove end of Dickie Barre and onward into the gorge of cascading Peters Kill.

Still, though the little demon drove them to avoid the spots where they were likely to meet, he could not follow them and regulate their varying thoughts and acts. His place was on that barrier, and on it he stayed. And thus he could not prevent the man from mentally living over at intervals a certain golden hour beside a deep green

pool up above, nor keep from that man's eyes a gentle, far-away look when that memory arose to keep him company. Neither could he block the girl from returning repeatedly to that pool with pencil and paper and crude sketching-board, nor close her ears to the farewell words of the man.

"Keep right on doing that—it's worth while—you're doing fine."

So the pair traveled their separate ways. And, traveling, Douglas noted that the new clothing of the hardwood forests was not the only change taking place round about him. Here and there in the woods he met men. And, as subtly as the chill of frosty morning gave way to the warmth of a sunny day, so the first coolness of these men of the Traps now was thawing into an intangible spirit of friendliness. Where previously they had given him a cold stare and curt replies or stony silence when addressed, now their faces relaxed at sight of him, and of their own volition they called—

"H'are ye, Hammerless!"

Moreover, when he paused a while to watch them rounding millstones into shape or cutting cordwood for charcoal, they betrayed no desire to have him move on. On the contrary, they went ahead with their toil as if he were one of their own neighbors, welcome to stay as long as he liked. Sometimes, too, they took a rest and smoked a pipe with him, saying little of their own accord, but answering without hesitation whenever he spoke. And when he moved along and left them, their "g'by" was as unobtrusively cordial as their greeting.

AS THE days drifted by and his wandering feet bore him into repeated contact with some of those men, the conversations became still more easy and natural—though never intimate. They talked of their work, and he learned interesting things: that millstone cutters, despite their hardy appearance and muscular development, usually died fairly young because the stone-dust entering the lungs caused tuberculosis; that charcoal-burning meant much exposure to inclement weather and constant vigilance, day and night, lest the vents of the smoking mound become plugged and the whole "mine" explode; that hoop-shaving, the main industry of the region, was steadily falling off because barrel-makers were adopting the "patent" hoops manufactured by mills; that honey-hunting, though productive of a passable revenue to the few whose instincts led them to follow it up, was arduous, uncertain, and often dangerous work because of the roughness of the country, its unexpected pitfalls, and its deadly snakes. And hunting and trapping, though fairly remunerative if one happened to have a lucky season, could hardly be considered a dependable source of income.

These and other things of the same sort he learned in the course of those recurring smoke-talks. He heard, too, the same phrase repeated by different men regarding their different industries—"a dog's life." But he observed also that the men labored faithfully on in that dog's life, and more than once there recurred to him Uncle Eb's defense of his neighbors:

"Folks is mostly honest round here. Good hard-workin' fellers."

The old man had spoken truth, it appeared. Though a few worthless drones might exist here and there, though more than one man might carry on surreptitious business "up into the rawcks," the Traps seemed to be inhabited mainly by steady toilers, wringing a primitive living from field and tree and stone and berry-bush. Still, Douglas did not lose sight of the fact that these workers did not compose the entire population. Nor did he fail to observe that the conversation of even those who seemed most friendly was tinged by reticence.

Of their work, of hunting and trapping, snakes and catamounts and other life, of weather and crops—of these things they would talk freely; but of one another they would say no word. Let a name be mentioned—even that of well-beloved Uncle Eb—and a silence would follow. True, there were two names which brought to their faces expressions as eloquent as words: Snake Sanders and Nat Oaks. At the first their eyes would narrow; at the second, their lips would turn down in contempt. But no comment, good or bad, was spoken of any one. It was borne in on the wanderer that, though civilly received, he still was not considered one of them; and that against all outsiders these hillmen, whatever their private opinions of one another, were a united clan.

In other little ways, too, this was shown. No man ever asked him for tobacco or

match. No man ever quizzed him as to his past, present, or future. No man betrayed friendly curiosity regarding his movements. None offered to sell him milk or eggs, or invited him to visit. Nor, though every one of them looked wistfully now and then at his up-to-date gun, did any one ask to be allowed to examine it—much less to handle it. Between him and them, as between him and Marion, stood an impalpable wall—though not the same wall. This was the barrier of clannish reserve.

It was in this same clannishness, however, that he found the key to their more friendly attitude. Though not much given to analyzing the motives of others, he naturally meditated on the change in their manner; and the solution came in a name which he never mentioned to them and which never was spoken in his hearing—Steve.

Though nothing ever was said about the refugee, he felt that the whole Traps clan knew Steve was here. And, since the thaw in the previous frigidity of the Trapsmen had come about since the afternoon when he had hoisted the desperate youth to the roof and badgered his pursuers into leaving the Wilham place empty-handed, it was not hard to deduce that the hill-dwellers also knew of what he had done that day. If so, they must know that he was neither detective nor criminal; for in the one case he would have worked with the officers, while in the other he would hardly have dared face them down. Therefore they now must regard him as what he actually was: a transient dweller here who had shown himself disposed to stand with them in protecting their own, but who presently would go back to his own world—and who, consequently, need not be trusted with information concerning any of them.

Very well; he could be as taciturn as any of them. And he was. He gave no information regarding himself, sought none about others—with one exception. And to that one exception the reply also was an exception, for it came readily, with a little grin of understanding.

"Heard anything of a couple of strangers?" was his occasional question. To which came the prompt response—

"Hearn they was still round here."

No man ever admitted that he had seen those strangers, or vouchsafed any additional details of what he had "hearn." But with that answer Douglas was content, for it showed that Ward and Bill had not run down their prey. Of Uncle Eb he saw nothing, for he spent little time at his own house and did not visit that of the old man. He felt, however, that the refugee was safely hidden somewhere among the ledges and faithfully fed, that Eb could take care of Eb very well, and that the less he himself knew about either of them at present the better all around.

Of others who had entered his life recently he also saw nothing in his daily rambles. Whatever Snake Sanders and Nigger Nat Oaks might be doing, they seemed to be avoiding his vicinity for the present. Each evening on returning to his haunted house he narrowly inspected both it and its clearing before entering, and afterward he looked into every room before preparing his night meal. Invariably he found all as he had left it. And when, healthily tired by his miles of tramping, he sought early slumber, even the ghostly Dalton's Death failed to disturb him.

Not that the "ha'nt" was laid. It still walked about overhead, still stole downstairs on its heels, still rustled the mattress of dead Jake Dalton and moved his bedstead. Perhaps, in the silent watches of the night, it did other things as well. If so, its restlessness meant nothing to the new tenant, who slept the sleep of a tired body and a clear conscience, awaking only at long intervals to hear some unaccountable sound and then, with a drowsy smile, drifting away again into dreamland.

Much of his easy rest, however, may have been due to the fact that he had changed beds. After the "line storm" cleared up he had acted on his decision to move out of reach of that too-convenient front window and door. He had cleaned out the little room where wood was piled, and on its floor he had built up a quieter, more fragrant couch of his own—a foot-thick layer of hemlock and spruce tips gleaned from the trees behind the house. On this real camper's bed he now slept, leaving Dalton's bedstead and noisy mattress just as he had first found them.

Each morning before leaving the house, though, he carried his blankets to that front bedroom and tossed them on the cornhusks. Thus, if any one came spying in his absence, the curtainless bedroom window would tell that spy that he habitually slept.

where he was supposed to sleep. A childishly simple ruse, perhaps, this was. Yet life or death sometimes hang on the simplest things.

And so, as has been said, the days brought their lights and shadows, the nights their stars and dreams; and within the ken of Hammerless Hampton nothing at all happened. Yet, unseen, the fingers of Destiny were steadily writing upon the pages of her future-book certain records which no mere mortal now could glimpse or guess.

Then, one lazy afternoon when he happened to be at his bare little home, there recurred to him the tale of Lou Brackett concerning the lost mine of the legendary Ninety-nine.

"Where the sun first strikes the wall in the morning, there is Ninety-Nine's Mine," ran the saying which the simple-minded woman had confided so mysteriously to him.

The "wall," of course, was the cliff-line within the Traps, not the great outer wall. Whimsically he decided to sleep that night upon the eastern heights and see just where the rising sun would strike first. Sunrise on the Traps, viewed from that lofty edge of things, would be a scene well worth a chilly night outdoors.

With a pack of blankets and spare clothing and a little food he started to go. But, with a boyish laugh, he returned to the house. From some old burlap bags and a few sticks of wood he made on Jake Dalton's bed a huddle which, in dim light, would resemble a blanketed form. Then he departed, whistling merrily.

Dusk found him high up on the Wall. At the same hour a form slipped out from the trees backing the house of Dalton. It peered nervously in at a gloomy window, stole along the side, slipped rapidly to the front stoop, and, with a quick jab, slid a piece of paper under the door. Then it jumped away and ran.

On the paper was written in scrawling characters—

For gord Sakes don't Sleep hear to Nite.

TO BE CONTINUED

No Ambition, No Humor, No Feelin's

by John Joseph

Author of "A Fool and His Fiddle," "Six-Hoss and Star-Face," etc.

WHEN the old-timers stampeded from an old camp to new diggin's, ye may be sure 'twas little enough they took along. A pick and shovel and pan they had to have, and a blanket and a frying-pan and a bit of grub, but anything they couldn't carry on their backs they left behind where it lay. Stoves they had—most of them—and home-made benches and chairs, and belike a clock or a mattress and the like of that; but ye may be sure they had no time to fool with any of that—when the gold-madness ran like whisky in their blood.

And often 'twas more than chairs and stoves they left behind. For 'twas seldom they ran away but they left some poor devil that the gold-madness and terrific pace of the times had made a bit queer in his head. At First Creek 'twas "Paystreak" Roper that stayed to dry-rot in a tent for half a century or more, while his old wagon tumbled down beside the creek and rotted away till nothing was left but a tangled mess of old iron, half-hidden in the grass and weeds.

At Stuart's Bar 'twas "Sourdough" Frayne, with the bristling red whiskers of him, and his shifty yellow eyes and crooked nose, that stayed to mold away and burn his stomach to a cinder with red-hot whisky of his own making. At Rush Creek 'twas "Sinkers" Meeker. At Brogan's Flat 'twas "Kanaka" Pete. And so it was—up and down the line—from Sutter Creek to the Blue Hills and back again.

Generally, ye may say, these "touched" old-timers were content just to keep alive—'twas little they were afther needing, ye know—by picking a little and rocking a little, here and there along a lean streak in some little creek; but now and again—do ye mind—there was one that something jarred into life again for a day or two, and belike he pulled off some crazy stunt that fairly made a man's flesh crawl.

'Twas "Windy" Sam Tutt was left behind at Roaring Fork in the stampede to Porter's Gulch in seventy-nine; and belike 'twas him that furnished the grandest surprize of the lot. Sam was always queer, from the first, and there's little doubt but Nature had him marked to live by himself and apart from the rest; but even so, the gold-madness put its mark upon him, and no man could gainsay that. Not—do ye mind—but what it marked all that fought for the maddening yellow specks that stopped on the "webfoot," or hid in the glittering mica-sand; but some it marked more than others, you know, and Sam was one of them.

A close-packed cluster of log-cabins, was Roaring Fork—setting all snug-like and cozy in a little clearing in the big pine-forest,

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with a big boarding-house standing next to the wagon road in front. But the camp itself was not for Sam. 'Twas too close and chummy-like for the likes of him. Or maybe he slept light and had the fear of bedbugs on him. Anyway—and the whys of it matter little—he built his cabin on a ledge of rock, overlooking the camp and maybe a hundred yards away, and there he lived alone and would not mix.

Well, like all the rest, Roaring Fork had its bit of a boom for a year or two, then slowly for half a dozen years the pay streaks petered out, one by one, and at last came the stampede to Porter's Gulch and overnight the camp was emptied of every man-jack but Windy Sam. But Sam stuck to his grease-smeared cabin, and his lean claim on a little branch called Red Fork, that tumbled down the mountain from the north.

Then came the Chinamen, with their patient ways and solemn looks, to "work over" the old diggin's for a dozen years; but at last even the chinks starved out and went away; and Sam was left alone again—this time for good and all. Sam stuck. The farmers came and settled the valley below—three miles it was to the nearest of them, for a long time—and soon or late they all passed that way, and knew Sam, and in time he came to be looked upon as a fixture—a regular part of the scenery, like old Red Mountain himself. And ye may be sure, these same settlers soon looted the cabins of everything the miners left behind. They carried away the windows and doors, prized up the floors and hauled them away; and at last nothing was left but the big cook stove—far too big it was for any of the settler's little kitchens—that stood on the ground in the floorless old boarding-house.

So the years rolled round, and the cabins rotted away at the corners and the roofs caved in, and one by one they tumbled down till only Sam's cabin and the old boarding-house were left standing.

A dreary, wretched, banshee-haunted place, it was, overgrown with weeds and vines and little pine-trees that grew as thick as harrow-teeth all over the place. Then, at last, a ground fire swept through the rotting tangle, and all that was left was a grim array of blackened stumps, and Sam's cabin, and the big stove standing there in the ashes of the old boarding-house.

So the space between Sam's cabin and the road was now clear, and nothing was there but the stumps and ashes, with here and there a doorknob or a hinge, and the old stove standing beside the road. A big range, it was, with an oven ye might roast a yearling in, and this doorless oven was gaping straight at Sam's old moss-grown cabin.

Some there were who said that Sam was only half-witted. Others claimed that he was simply stupid. But all were agreed that he was the most harmless man on earth; that no such thing as ambition or humor or feelin's had ever touched him; that he was the laziest and dirtiest human that ever drew the breath of life. A big, bony, wooden-faced man, he was, with a head like a mallet, and washed-out-blue eyes ye'd have said had nothing behind them but maybe a trifling teaspoonful or two of dogwood sap and sawdust.

He never smiled or laughed, and the nickname "Windy" had been stuck on him for only the left-hand reason that he never gave tongue to word if there was any way to get around it. He had but a small taste for whisky, but now and again he'd drag into the Settler's Bar, in the village that was five miles below, and hold up two fingers. Jack Harper, that ran the place in those days, would set out the bottle; Sam would swallow two big drinks—all by himself, mind ye—then he'd shuffle out again without a word to any one.

THE little valley of the Roaring Fork—'twas little more than a cañon where the old camp stood—spread out a bit, perhaps a mile below, and the day came when Dick Parmlee came along and took up a "shoestring" ranch there. Like all the others, 'twas little enough Dick had to his name, but he was a blithe lad, and it's singing or whistling ye'd find him wherever ye might meet him. Mayhap the lad was happy because of the little wife—the prettiest bit of calico in the valley, she was—and there was the young ones—young Dick that was three, and Mamie five, and Rosie that was nine—as likely a lot of kiddies as ye'd care to look at. Poor they were, but happier, like enough, than many a lot of rich folks.

Sam kept to himself for a year or so, but after awhile, to every one's surprize, he took to dropping in now and then for a bit of a meal at Nell Parmlee's table. For a while the clapper-tongued old women thereabouts would have it that Sam was sponging

his feed, but Nell Parmlee let it be known that whenever Sam left—no matter if he'd had a meal or not, mind ye—there was always a silver dollar left laying somewhere around. Sometimes young Dick found it in his bit of a pocket, sometimes it was laying under Sam's plate, sometimes just laying on the step outside. But always it was there—some place.

Sam used to sit around for half a day sometimes—so Nell said—just watching the children at their play. He seemed to take a fancy for little Mamie, and now and then he took her on his knee and stared at her, stupid-like for a minute or two; but he never spoke to one of them, and Nell sometimes worried over Sam's queer ways, and wondered if it was quite safe to have so strange a creature hanging round.

Along the railroads and where there was plenty of water for the irrigating, the country was well-settled by this time—mind ye—but over beyond the Saw Tooth Range was a wild country of hills and brush and cañons that was miscalled the "High Prairie" country. And in this wild place—a fearsome hard place to get into or out of, it was—were gathered desperadoes from all parts. Train-robbers and murderers with a price upon their heads found safety there; and leader of them all and the worst of the lot was "Bloody Tim" Crull. From Tim's place they struck out—train-robbers and stage-robbers and city hold-up men—and pulled off high crimes perhaps a thousand miles away; and when they came back they split the loot with Bloody Tim. And now and again, when time hung heavy on their hands, or nothing better was in sight, Crull's gang came boiling out of a cañon to rustle horses in the Roaring Fork country.

On moonlight nights they came, to scour the country for miles around, and by morning they'd be safe back in the cañons where no man that valued his life would dare to follow. True enough, officers in strong force had been there at various times, but, for a notorious fact, never once had they ever brought back a prisoner; and by this time 'twas only a fierce crime could send them in again.

And then, one unlucky day, Dick Parmlee struck out alone to ride the range—and never came back. What happened was—as it afterwards came out—that Dick happened upon Crull's gang, hazing a bunch of horses, ——'s lather, into a cañon. Dave Crull, that was a brother to Tim, was leading. Dick followed—'twas little discretion he had when he did it—but he followed, keeping well out of sight, or so he thought. But some of the gang spied the lad, and Dave Crull and one other hid behind some rocks, at a turn in the trail, and shot the boy down as he came along. Dick came to himself for a minute, and the two bandits stood beside him grinning down and calmly rolling cigarets. And Dick, knowing well-enough that the cutthroats would never leave him alive, whipped out his gun and shot Dave Crull dead in his tracks.

'Twas the next morning when Nell roused the neighbors, and a party was got together to ride the hills, and towards noon of the second day they found the lad, riddled with bullets and mutilated with knives. They brought the body home and sent a man to notify the sheriff, and next day they buried Dick in the little village burying-ground, and a sad day it was.

Old Sam Tutt came, but he only looked on and said not a word, and the leathery old face of him looked like 'twas no more than a block of cross-grained wood. And when the service was over and Sam slouched away, the folks were all agreed that the man had no feelin's at all; that Dick's death and the awful mutilation of him never touched Sam more than 'twould if Dick had been a mule or a dog.

THAT night the sheriff came—eighty rocky miles it was to the county-seat, and the man was swaying in the saddle when he got there—and a meeting was held in the Settler's Bar to scheme out a way to fetch the murderers before the law. Old Sam strolled in and sat around for awhile, looking like he hadn't sense enough to wind a watch, and by and by he dragged himself away again.

And little came from the meeting, for hunting that fearsome gang on their own ground was no light matter for a handful of farmers to do, but rather a thing for the governor to take in hand. So the sheriff promised to take the matter up with the State authorities, and belike the so'ger boys would be sent along to clean the nest of robbers out, once for all; and the meeting broke up and that was the end of that.

Then, fast on the heels of the first, came another crime that was ten times worse. To be sure the truth of it didn't all come out

at once, like I'm telling it, but in the end 'twas all clear enough.

Tim Crull, when he saw the body and learned the way his brother came to his death, was wild with a black rage that fair burned him through and through. So he loaded the gang with whisky and came at two o'clock in the mornin' to the Parmlee place. And the mad devils fired the house, and when Nell and the little ones ran out from the fire, they shot them all dead and rode away into the night.

The Parmlee place was only a bit of a clearing in the forest, and Windy Sam's was the nearest house to it, and that's how it was that no man heard the shooting or saw the fire. Then Pete Lamar, that had a farm two miles below, came riding past in the early morning and found Nell and the kiddies lying dead in the yard, with little Dick clasped tight in Nell's two arms. Pete spread the alarm, and by ten o'clock the whole countryside was there. Sure it was a fearsome time, and feeling ran high, but the thing was done and nothing could mend it now, so there was nothing to do but swear vengeance and bury the poor bodies beside the other that was Dick's. Old Sam came to the funeral, but he just stood around, as he had before, and seemed not to sense in the least the black tragedy of it all.

Well, the sheriff came again, and looked around, and went home again, and took the matter up with the governor; but long before the red tape was half-unwound, the whole thing was squared up, and the account wiped clean from the books for all time. And a surprizing, shuddering thing it was! Not but what the beginning was easy enough—'twas the end that left every man staring at his neighbor.

In the beginning it was old Sam Tutt set everybody talking, when he borryed a horse from old man Freeman and rode away in the hills; and be my own recollection 'twas six days later when he came back. He put the horse in Freeman's corral, and ye may be sure that every man was watching close when he strolled into the bar. But Sam had no explanation—just held up two fingers, took his two big drinks and slouched out again, without a word.

And that was only the beginning. Next mornin', it was, when the two Porter boys came in, swearing themselves black in the face because some one had broken into their powder magazine and stolen all their powder. Two hundred pounds of forty per cent. dynamite there was, and having just paid out ninety good dollars for it mayhap they had a right to swear a bit. I'll not say no to that, anyway.

Then, next mornin' again, 'twas old man Freeman that took his turn at the swearing. Some one had broken into his store, sometime during the night, and the strange part about it was—the prowler paid no respect to the money laying easy in the till, nor the watches and guns and other things that was worth the taking, but contented himself with making off with a bit of a roll of fine wire.

Well, come night again, and the thief paid his respects to Fred Barton, that ran the village blacksmith shop. Fred had been running the shop for twenty years or more, and belike he'd pulled the wornout shoes from a thousand freight and saddle horses. Now Fred, like many another man, had a bit of a whim about him; and that was to build up the old shoes in a neat pile behind his shop. Hollow like a chimney, it was, and maybe three feet across and six feet high, and old Fred was that proud of it that every stranger come along he'd take him out to have a look.

Well, as ye know, if ye want to rouse a man and set him boilin' mad, just put your hand to his pet fad—and belike ye'll do it quick enough. Two feet was gone from the top of the pile, this mornin', and ye may sure that Fred was quick to have his eye on it. And it's mad the man was when he come frothin' into the Settler's bar, and eased his mind of what he thought of the man with little shame enough to lay his hand to the pile of shoes. A strange thing it was, too. For what any man in his senses could want of three hundred pounds weight of old horseshoes, was more than any man could find the answer to. So every one was guessing now, ye may be sure, and wondering what 'twould be that happened next.

Now "Bloody" Tim had a pal called "Curley" George. A desperate man he was, with the surname Rice, and 'twas this same day a rumor came floating around that some one had put the fixin's to Rice—had hid behind some rocks and shot him down, fair in front of Tim Crull's own door. Tim was frothing mad, the rumor said, and swearing by all the saints he knew, that if ever he laid hands on the man that done it,

he'd skin him alive and tan his hide for a pair of saddle-bags!

Now it happened that sometime during the night just past, some one had shoved a letter under the door of the store—for Freeman was postmaster, mind ye, and kept the office in the store. Freeman had thought nothing of it at the time, so he put the letter in the bag, and the bag was in the stage and the stage was ready to go. Then Freeman heard the rumor—'twas the stage-driver brought it in, ye know—and bethought himself of the letter, and nothing would do the man but he must have it out of the bag and have another look. And sure enough, 'twas like he thought, the letter was addressed to Tim Crull at High Prairie post-office. And now that rumor had Rice killed in Crull's own dooryard, 'twas Freeman's thought that the letter might in some way be connected with the killing. But it was addressed in a strange hand, and showed no direction for return, so there was nothing to do but put it back in the bag and let it go, and that was the end of that.

So one thing followed another, and every day some queer thing came up to set the people gabbing, but the biggest surprize of the lot was when Bob Davis came in and reported Sam Tutt's new sign. According to Bob's account Sam had nailed some boards to a bit of plank and stuck the plank down the pipe-hole of the old boarding-house stove that stood beside the road in front of Sam's cabin. It was a queer thing for Sam to be putting up a signboard, but, to be sure, 'twas the message on it that set them all gabbing. For it stated, or so Bob said, that Sam would *be at home and prepared to receive company, afternoons and evenings until further notice.*

The crowd was slow to believe the yarn, for Bob was known far and wide—mind ye—as a joshin' liar with no more conscience for the truth than a chicken-stealing nigger. But he swore by his words, this time, and during the day every one must take a little ride around that way and have a look at Sam's queer sign. Four feet square, it was, and stuck up in the pipe-hole just as Bob had said it was. And a lot of gabbing there was at the Settler's Bar that night! But no man could make any sense out of Sam's crazy sign, and the common opinion was that Sam's feeble wits had completely slipped their moorings at last, and that soon or late the law would have to take the man in hand.

Well, by me own recollection again, 'twas three nights later when it happened. A June night, it was—one of those Summer nights when the air is soft as silk—when a little breeze rustles the leaves and brings along the sweet smell of pine-woods, and Summer flowers, and all growing things. A night when the full moon is riding along, all serene and easy-like in a clear sky, and looking so close that almost ye might think ye could reach up and pull it down with your own two hands. A night when crickets chirp in the grass, and frogs trill in the marshes, and men are thinking that, only for the dew, they'd like to sleep in the soft grass. And now and again belike ye'd hear a coyote's shrill chatter on some far hill, and the wailing answer of some lonesome hound.

And then—'twas maybe half-past one, or two in the mornin'—like an echo from hell itself there comes a blast that shakes the earth and rumbles in the hills for ten long miles around! Windows rattle and dishes clatter—like the banshees might be making a night of it! The weird music of crickets and frogs is suddenly stilled, dogs crawl under porches, with their tails between their legs, or scratch and whine at doors, and every one for miles around leaps from the bed to rush outdoors and stare around as if the world might be coming to an end. But the moon is still there, settled way down in west, now, and the old fella that lives upon her is smiling down as nice and easy-like as if there were no such things as dynamite—and savage men to fire it off in the small hours of a lovely, peaceful night.

Ye may be sure there was no more sleep for any one *that* night! By common thought they gathered in front of the Settler's Bar, and within the hour every man—and half the women, too—were clustered in the street, with half a hundred youngsters, half-dressed and wild-eyed, whispering among themselves. And the gabbing? Belike ye'll hear the like of it no more than once in a lifetime! And it's all talking at once they were, when Bob Davis rode up, and then 'twas quiet enough while Bob had his say.

By Bob's account it was clear that strange things had been going on that night. He had returned late from a trip to Tollman City, he said, and was just afther pulling the saddle from his horse when he heard a

tremendous rattling in the rocky road. So he dropped the saddle and peeped through the stable door in time to see a big party of horsemen riding past at a hard gallop. Thirty of them, there were, by Bob's estimate. It was bright moonlight, the stable was no more than twenty feet from the road, so Bob could see them plain, and he made no doubt that 'twas Crull's outfit, with Bloody Tim in the lead, and riding like the —— was at their horses' tails. Bob throwed on again and followed fast, but he missed them after all, and so turned back to his cabin and was just stopping at the gate, when the blast near tossed him from the saddle. Then he came to town, by a short cut through the hills, as fast as the horse could carry him.

Well, Jack Harper openec up and the men crowded around the bar, and after a bit Windy Sam maundered in. Moving like a crippled old mud-turtle, he was, and he moped up to the bar and held up two fingers and Jack set the bottle before him.

Then, all at once, Sam had them all by the ears. For the first time in forty years he rapped the bar with his fist and brightened up and asked them all to have a drink. The men stared, ye may be sure, but they took their drinks like the gentlemen they were. Sam swallowed his regulation two, then tossed a gold piece on the bar and started out. He was near the door, and every man had his eye on him, when Jack called his name. Well, Sam turned around, hesitating-like, and Jack asked him had he heard the explosion.

Then Sam made the only speech of his life. An oration, it was—for Sam! He cupped his two hands around his mouth and yelled at the crowd, and by me own recollection of it this is what he said:

"Dynamite! Two hundred pounds of her! Three hundred horseshoes! Rifle bullet touched her off! Breath of hell, fellers, breath of hell! Beautiful blast!"

Then Sam walked over and put his two hands, palms down on the bar.

"Look!" he said.

We looked, and the hands were smeared with a reddish-yellow, greasy-looking mist. His face was the same. Then Sam pulled up his sleeve, and half-buried in the fleshy part of his arm was the gold-capped tooth of a man. Sam pulled it out and held it up, then he laughed. A hoarse bellow, it was, that ye might have heard for two long miles. Then he turned and went out, and that's the last we ever saw of him.

DAY was breaking, by this time, and when the breath was coming free again every one struck out for Sam's cabin at the old placer camp. The cabin was flat on the ground—a tangled mess of logs and shakes and boards. The old stove had disappeared, and the spot where it stood was a hole in the ground, full ten feet deep and twice as wide. The big pine-trees that stood near by were stripped of everything but the big limbs, and peeled clean of the last scrap of bark. Smaller trees were blown flat on the ground or completely uprooted; the standing trees bristled with old horseshoes, some of them driven nearly out of sight in the green wood. One showed a horse's foot and the steel horn of a saddle, another a twisted six-shooter driven in the full length of the long barrel. One showed the stock of a rifle, another the flattened cylinder of a pistol, another a boot-heel and the jaw-bone of a man, and all were peppered full of splinters of bone and teeth of men and horses, and bits of cloth and buttons, and a fine smear of a fearsome sausage that was pulverized flesh and specks of blood.

A fearful thing it was! A thing to make a man's hair stand, and his flesh creep, and paralyze his tongue! And it's quiet they were, as they looked around, and shuddered, with now and then a whispered word or two, and little by little they sensed what had happened and understood what it meant.

Some one pulled Sam's rifle from the wreck of the cabin, and looped through the trigger-guard they found the end of a string of fine wire. They followed the wire to a ledge of rock, perhaps five hundred feet beyond the cabin, and there they found where Sam had lain hid and kept watch and pulled the wire to fire his blast. Everybody talked at once, ye may be sure, and in time they pieced it all out and knew exactly what Sam had done and how he worked it out.

In the first place Sam had borryed the horse and slipped over to the High Prairie country, where he watched for his chance and killed Curley George Rice. Having thus roused the fury of Bloody Tim Crull, Sam came home and followed a well-thought plan. First he stole the powder and horseshoes, and broke into the store and fetched

along the roll of wire. Then he wrote the letter to Crull, telling who it was that shot George Rice.

Knowing Crull's savage, bloody ways, Sam felt sure of his ground—knew well that Tim would plan a fearsome vengeance and waste no time in carrying it out. Whereby Sam put the powder in the big oven and packed it all around with horseshoes, and left a bit of a hole in front to let the bullet in. Then he rigged a frame in his cabin and wired his rifle to it, and trained the gun on the hole through the horseshoes.

His next move was to put up his sign, for he knew 'twould show up fine in the bright moonlight, and the raiders, never thinking for a minute that the old stove was anything but harmless as any other bit of rusting iron, would all come close to have a look. But unbeknown to Crull and his gang, the old stove, with its fearful stuffing of dynamite and horseshoes, was a terrible bomb that would pale a brave man and make the flesh crawl on his bones—just to put his eye to it.

And old Sam waited, with all the patience of a lean cat, and the letter did its work, and the gang came along at last and stopped around the old stove.

No doubt they thought to torture Sam, belike they meant to skin him alive as Tim had sworn he would—and Sam lay grinning behind the ledge, with the wire in his hand, and watched them gather close around the stove. And when they were all bunched to suit him he pulled the wire—and sent them all to —— together!

By Mighty! 'Twas a thing to make a hard man take off his hat, when he got his mind to working on it. Thirty men, and as many horses, too—blown to a mist in the time 'twould take to wink your eye! And all planned out so slick and easy—by a man that had no feelings, or sense enough to tell the time of day!

Of course the sheriff had to take the matter up and have a little hunt for Sam; but 'twas said by many that his eyes went bad. So bad in fact, they said, that he even passed Sam in the street in Rockland, in broad day—and never saw the man at all. At any rate he never got Sam, and to this day no man that knew him on Roaring Fork knows what ever became of him. But they do know—and 'tis more to the point—that the old fox had been taking a lot of gold out of his claim on the Red Fork, for the sheriff found out that Sam had been slyly cashing in his dust at the Rockland bank—to the tune of over eighty thousand dollars—and the supposition is that he trailed back to old Missouri to spend his declining years in peace and plenty, and sleep!

Anyhow, Sam disappeared, and the blast that sent him away was all the talk for many a month. And whenever it died down, some one was sure to pick up a relic that set them all going again. One time it was a boot sole, with part of a man's heel glued fast with dried blood. At other times it was a mangled six-shooter, or a twisted rifle-barrel, or a belt-buckle—some of them picked up a long mile from the scene of the blast.

And only last year Pete Lamar cleaned out his horse-trough and found a smashed brass button, which he claimed had once held Bloody Tim Crull's coat across the bosom of him. Well, maybe it did; maybe not. 'Tis a small matter anyhow. What is more to the point the Crull gang was never heard of after the blast.

That is one thing, and another is—old man Freeman got a letter from Sam, shortly after he disappeared. It had been mailed at Salt Lake, and a draft was in it for a thousand dollars. And Sam's instructions were to pay for the powder that was stole, and the horseshoes and the wire. Then five hundred was to be spent for a monument to be set up on the Parmlee lot, and whatever was left should be spent for a stone in memory of Bloody Tim Crull.

That was the body of the letter, but there was a postscript setting forth Sam's best thought in the matter of an appropriate epitaph to chisel on Tim Crull's monument. 'Twas a grand idea Sam had, to be sure, and whatever any other body might think of it, it told a lot to any man that knew Sam Tutt! Sam's idea was that these words should be cut deep and wide on the stone:

MAN THAT IS BORN OF WOMAN IS OF FEW DAYS AND FULL OF PRUNES. HE GOETH FORTH IN THE MORNING WITH BLOOD IN HIS EYE, AND AT NIGHT HIS REMAINS—IF ANY—ARE MOPPED UP WITH A SPONGE. COMPLIMENTS OF SAM TUTT.

It was done as Sam directed, and, while Tim Crull's name is at the top, the letters

are but little ones; and Sam's name, in big letters below, dominates the inscription and the stone. Which is as it should be, for 'tis really a monument to Sam Tutt, that had his feelin's as deep as any man. And a sad thing it is to think about—the poor —— sitting about, staring at Nell and the kiddies, with his heart bursting with the loneliness of him, and overflowing with love and kindness—and never able to give speech to the thing that was in his soul! But so it was, and there was no mending of it.

Author of "Amos Tregenna," "Twinkle Bright," etc.

IT WAS night-time in sailortown and the crews were gone ashore; leaving silent ships under a cold crescent; the river flowing golden past them toward the sea cold as the moon; silent as the ghostly ships upon its breast; along the wooden wharves no foot-fall, no voice, no light; naught but gloomy shadows, and a silence quite unbroken.

Unseen, unheard, the ship's night watchmen kept their quiet vigil, waiting for the day. Sometimes a match-flare sudden in the murk, a white face loomed a moment—wrinkled, bearded, bright-eyed and sea-patient. Red sparks moved slowly forth and back beneath shroud shadows; men's bent figures, guessed rather than seen, moving where those sparks moved—watchmen communing with their peaceful pipes; old men staying to gaze a while over ship's railings into slow-running waters; turning to stare aloft at mast-heads star-companied against a soundless sky; old fellows uttering half-sighs in the night watches; antique, sea-battered, men; fathers of the forecastles, decrepitude creeping upon them; their face-furrows burned by suns ablaze on every ocean; their limbs bearing old bruise scars gained between the North Cape and the Horn; their palms as rusty leather, well preserved; their fingers hooky; thoughts unspoken. Fantom-like they moved about the decks, slowly from forecastle to poop and slowly back—enhancing the fantasy of that fantastic night; dreaming of other ports at other voyage's endings; of comrades drowned in many seas—old men waiting the rising of the tide, and morning's coming.

In sailortown trees cast shadows on a street filled with the sound of music and of singing; a street light-flickered from bright windows, from ever opening, ever closing doors; men coming and going, singly or in little companies; their entrance to taverns greeted noisily. Shrill voices echoed. Boisterous tones were noisy on the night.

The trees along the sidewalks, moonlight glimmering through their branches, lamplight reflected upon their rough trunks, seemed as spectators in a galleried theater of night.

Laughter, and the clink of glass on glass, were frequent; sounds as of waters at a rivermouth, commingling with a sea beyond the bar; flotsam and mud forever lost in that great sea's immensity.

Of all corners of that street the noisiest was that where stood the Golden Eagle tavern; the inn-walls obscure behind gnarled tree-trunks; lights, ashine from windows, upon branch and leaf; laughter, and song to a piano's tune, reaching the street. Above the door, upon a wide glass plate, the image of a spread-winged eagle hovered directly above those who came and went—a mighty bird of hooked talons and eager

*This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See first contents page.

beak; seeming as if about to transfix each passer-by, but ever disappointed of his prey.

Suddenly, the laughter ceasing, the chorus of a sea-song rang loud upon the night; greeted at its close by shouts of applause.

"Sing, sailor, sing!" cried a woman's voice, answered immediately by the song of another singer, her voice joining his; every one rousing the boisterous chorus of a sailor's song until each window seemed to shake and rattle to the slap of waves and to the thunder of a wind across the sea.

"Faintly gleams the north star
As it shines on our starboard bow;
We're homeward bound for Liverpool town
And our hearts are in it now.

"We've crossed the line and the Gulf Stream,
Been down by Table Bay;
We've rounded the Horn, and we're homeward bound,
And that is the sailor's way."

A woman sang the chorus then, alone; her voice as a silver bell aswing upon some sea-bound clipper's forecastle head; as the wave's song about that clipper's feet.

The parlor of the place was full of men and women. They were drinking together from a common fund. Early in the evening a sailor, passing his hat around, had taken a "tarpaulin muster," every one present putting in such coin as he might afford.

"Nicky, old son," said the sailor, rolling the money upon the shiny bar, "when that's gone, say so. We'll have another tarpaulin muster. The old *Silverwing* goes to sea on the morning tide."

Most of the crew of the *Silverwing* were there that night; as well as men from many other ships.

Two women, gathering the glasses as the song came to an end, took them to the bar; and, when they were again refilled, passed them about the company. Round the sides of the room were chairs and couches, save where a door led to the bar, and another to the rooms above. Across a corner was the piano.

The glasses handed round, a sailor, rising, lifted his glass, crying—

"Here's to the old *Silverwing*—drink her down!"

They drained their glasses; another crying then—

"Come on, *Silverwing*—give us a song!"

A sailor of the *Silverwing* arose, the assembly cheering him:

" 'Oh, this is me and no one else,'
Says Abel Brown, the sailor.
'Oh, this is me and no one else,'
Says Abel Brown, the sailor."

He sang with his pipe in one hand; the other hand waving to the company.

As, amidst the loud laughter of all, he finished the song, a woman entered the room. She was tall. She wore a flaming red gown, that ended well above her slender ankles. Her ankles were most shapely, as were her long white arms, bare almost to the shoulder. Her hair, black as a crow's wing, hung in jet curls about her pale oval face; her neck as the neck of one of those white sea-birds which sailors, meeting as they near the shore after long voyaging, call "homeward pilots"—white, soft, full of grace; but warmer than a sea-fowl's feathers. Her large, dark eyes dazzled as gems in far forsaken deeps of some old mine. She wore nor ring nor bracelet; her sole adornment her own most Valkyr beauty.

As the song ceased and the applause died away she stepped to the center of the room.

"Where's 'Ear-Ring'?" she asked.

Before any one replied she added—

"I'm going to dance him down for those ear-rings."

Laughter and applause were loud.

"Where's Ear-Ring?" they cried, one to another.

A sailor, looking in from the bar room, said—

"Ear-Ring's down to the Shipmate's Joy."

Looking about the room, the tall girl asked:

"Who gets him, eh? Who goes for Ear-Ring?"

Her voice as a wind, low at red sunset, above the opening lilac buds; most sweet; and, yet, a wind with Spring's cold crystal in it.

Several sailors, arising, went out; returning in a few minutes with a newcomer.

He was a big man; the biggest there; his shirt, open at the neck, showing a chest viking-like and hairy; his sleeves, rolled to the elbow, leaving bison muscles bare. He was clean-shaven; his shirt and trousers of blue dungaree; his face sea-weather tanned; his eyes most bright, below large, shaggy brows; his hair and eyebrows coppery; his face almost expressionless; the man appearing as if his mind were quite elsewhere.

Unconscious of the eyes upon him, he sought a place to sit.

"No you don't!" cried a girl. "Here's Vernie, and she's going to dance you down for those ear-rings."

The sailor looked about him.

From his ears hung silver ear-rings, large, and studded with black pearls; ear-rings of peculiar design; adding a sort of mystery to the man who wore them; as if ear-rings and wearer held a common secret.

The crow-wing girl stood watching him; her lips half-parted; her eyes shining, most gem-like and intense.

Seeing her, he looked inquiry; and, stepping up to him, she said:

"Say! Listen, sailor! I want those ear-rings, see?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

As the sailor turned to go to a chair she laughed aloud. Never, till now, had she set eyes on the ear-ring sailor; though hearing much of him, and of his strength upon the mainsail's bunt when gales were in the canvas; as of his great weight upon the halyards when winds came fair and ships made sail at sea. She had heard how he gloried, quietly, in his strength; no man his match.

As he sat down she called to him—

"You're scared a girl can dance you down, eh, sailor?"

Laughing, the men and women looked at him.

Ashore, after the fashion of his kind, he was a quiet man; appearing lost; a simple fellow with all save ships and women; knowing the former from truck to keelson; understanding their handling well. As for women, they amused him—as gray African monkeys, or the antics of a Madagascar cat, amused him; being apt to put their heads upon his shoulder, whispering; to place their small arms about his neck, calling quietly from their eyes to him; to run small fingers up and down upon his great paws, as if to feel the bear-like power in them. In a manner they were not unlike to ships; in need of watching; not to be trusted too far. One could not say what they might next be up to.

His world was a world of ships and of women; for he fared seaward with the lofty clippers—dainty packets with uplifted heels, the sea-pearls scattered at their plunging feet. Ships he loved for their responsive loveliness; though he could not have said so; for he did not know that it was so. Women loved him for his strength—after a woman's manner: for, though they love all weak things, motherly, yet they love best a strong man, loverly; contemptuous of cowards—though those also find ones to love them; there being love for all. But *men* came first. Then culture bred in cowards—as missionaries are ever followed by the vicious. We, by right of heritage, are all cave men; and women are for us, as we for them—the bear, man-strangled, dead at the dark cave's mouth.

The sailor of the ear-rings was the slave of the sea; slave to a cruel mistress; knowing not even that he was enslaved; unable to say why he must follow her; a man of the ports, come whence and going whither, none might say.

The parlor of the Golden Eagle ringing with the laughter of the men and women gathered there, he sat down; the girl of the crow-wing hair coming to stand above him, looking down upon him; a smile, scornful, on her half-parted lips.

"Scared I'll win your ear-rings from you, eh?"

Then, understanding that she challenged him, he arose.

A man, seated at the piano, spoke to the girl:

"Where's Billy Dick? Fetch Billy."

Billy Dick entered the parlor, a little fellow, wizened as a toad; his squat face freckled, pimples on his chin; his crooky fingers all tobacco-stained; his watery eyes red-rimmed; his thin hair sandy; his outstanding ears as bat ears—transparent as sand-scoured sea-shells; all his skin yellow—a sallow fiddler fellow.

"Watcher want?" said he.

"Fetch yer fiddle, Billy—fetch yer fiddle."

Looking from the girl to the sailor of the silver ear-rings, Billy Dick left the room; returning in a moment, his fiddle under his arm. A woman pushing a stool to the center of the room for him, he sat down.

The girl of the crow hair and the dungareed sailor of the ear-rings stood before him, face to face, a few feet apart. The girl, her dark eyes alight with expectancy, gay with inquiring challenge, a smile upon her lips, looking up into the sailor's face.

The sailor did not seem to see, or notice, her.

Taking her crimson gown between her fingers she held it up to either side; the

light from above falling, all asparkle, upon the flashing silver buckles on her little shoes.

Tossing her head to the sailor, she threw a foot forward; the fiddle beginning to play; her feet to jig; the sailor looking straight into her eyes, a hand on either hip, beginning to dance; neither girl nor sailor making the slightest effort; their feet as part of the fiddler's tune. The company leaned forward on their seats to watch the dancers; a few of them standing.

A woman, young, with yellow hair, robed in a yellow gown, as if a golden thistle grew amidst ripe wheat's pale amber, rising, came close to the dancers; standing between, and facing, them. She bent downward upon one knee; her face upturned to the great seaman's face above her; and, laying one hand upon her bended knee, she beat her other palm upon that upturned palm with rhythmic sound and motion; each onlooker, as he or she sat watching, beginning unconsciously also to beat the time with palm on palm, gently—a low and ever increasing urge to the feet of the two dancers to fly a little faster. The bartender, with men from the bar, crowding to the parlor door, the room became ringed with eager faces; each face fixed upon a dancer's face; upon either the expressionless eyes of the ear-ringed sailor, or upon the expectant face of the crow-haired girl whose silver buckles flashed the light into a maze of brightness round her feet.

Tossing her curls, the girl cried:

"Billy, Billy, come to life! I want them ear-rings."

Then Billy Dick, grunting, played the faster. The sailor's feet made no effort; his lithe body upright, quite without motion as he danced. Leaning far forward on his stool, his hands upon his knees, his face upon the fiddler's face, the man at the piano murmured constantly—

"Faster, Billy, faster."

The crimson robe of the dancing girl fluttered above her ankles. Tossing her curls from side to side, away from her face, smiling, she kept her eyes ever upon the eyes of the sailor.

His hands upon his hips, neither smiling nor frowning, with no sign that he so much as saw her, he stared into her eyes.

They danced; Billy Dick's fingers flying with the fiddle bow; beads of perspiration coming upon his toad-like, freckled face.

The yellow-haired girl, kneeling, clapped her hands. Save for the voice of the man at the piano constantly bidding the fiddler fiddle faster, no voice was heard; the onlookers, their glasses held in all sorts of positions, staring at the dancers; wisps of smoke arising from unpuffed pipes and cigarets. Leaning in the doorway, an aged sailor puffed vigorously at his black pipe, blowing dense clouds down wrinkled nostrils; seeming to aim a jet of smoke at the figure of each of the dancers.

The girl, ceasing to smile, danced now with set face; her eyes half-closed. Her head a little drooped, her lovely chin forward, she gazed into the sailor's eyes; as a witch telling off the moments till her victim should be won; dancing with an abandonment, a mad daring, that became more and more a thing apart from herself; as if the spirit of the wizard-driven fiddle bow were in her feet; taking entire possession of her.

The sailor danced as if the fiddle had nothing at all to do with it; as if that yellow thistle girl, with her white, beating hands, were not there at all, her eager, watchful face upon his own. Unseeingly he stared at the slender woman before him.

Billy Dick's face was wet; beads of sweat, breaking into trickles, creeping down across the freckles of his brow and face.

Arising, ceasing to beat the time, the thistle girl stood, open-mouthed, watching the dancers; the crimson gown of the crow-wing girl almost touching her yellow robe in it's incessant flutterings. Drawing deep breaths, as if exhausted, she looked from the face of one to the face of the other; her bosom heaving beneath the softness of her wheaty robe.

The sailor made no sign of weariness.

The crow girl, her head drooped yet a little lower, her lips slightly parted, a gleam of white teeth between them, her neck a bending lily stalk, danced as a water siren striving to lure a strange, indifferent prey to her quiet cave—a cave of sun-warmth, very tempting.

"Play, Billy, play," cried the man at the piano.

Billy Dick was biting his underlip; frowning as the sweat-beads flowed upon his face.

Suddenly, drooping his head over his fiddle, his arm dropped limp beside him. The dancers, their feet half-lifted, waiting to start again.

No one spoke.

Wiping his face, Billy Dick, looking up, muttered—

"I'm done."

Even as he spoke, the awaiting company watchful about him, there crashed upon the silence of the night the deep tones of a ship's iron bell.

Then, from the tiers of ships that lay, like captured sea ghosts, chained to the silent wharves along the riverside, came the beating of the bells.

The night-watchman aboard the *Silverwing* had struck eight bells at midnight to call the hands aboard; and from ship to ship echoed the voices of their iron bells—all ringing in salute to send a ship to sea. As suddenly as they had broken the silence they ceased their clamor and the night was still again—ghost ships peopled by red sparks of pipes of old night-watchmen, who waited for the day to come; old men dreaming of old days; of sailors lost at sea with their ships; old men awaiting the time of high tide and the blowing of the off-shore winds.

Billy Dick arose.

"I'm done," said he; and, tucking the fiddle under his arm, he went from the room.

The company, calling for a last drink before parting, lined along the bar; talking of the dance, and laughing. Some spoke of the homeward passage, raising their glasses to the name *Silverwing;* wishing the clipper a good passage, and calling to her hands—

"Meet you off the Horn." The men of the sea-bound ship replying:

"Aye! Or some other day. In Poplar or in Castle Gardens, maybe."

Names were called and healths drunk; glass clinking on glass as men, nodding one to another, parted company going out to the night.

In the parlor the girl and the sailor stood facing each other; the girl breathing deeply, as if half-exhausted; the sailor, his great hands yet upon his hips, without a sign of weariness.

Straightening her shoulders, the girl gazed deep into his eyes.

She stepped close to him and, her face almost against his great chest, laid a hand upon his arm.

"Sailor," she whispered, "you've got me. I don't want your earrings any longer. *I want you.*"

THE DEATH OF AN INDIAN

by Edwin L. Sabin

IN THE all-day battle of Slim Buttes, South Dakota, September 9, 1876, when from their natural rifle-pits the Sioux under Chief American Horse and Chief Roman Nose valiantly held off the infantry and cavalry of General Crook the Gray Fox, the Indians were prevailed upon to surrender.

Among the first to issue from the coverts was American Horse himself—a splendid example of the Sioux, stalwart, broad-chested, and imperious. He was supported on one side by a young warrior; on the other by Baptiste Pourrier, an army guide; for he had been shot through the abdomen, and his intestines were protruding from the wound. But his wife hastened to him and wrapped a shawl about his middle to hold them in.

With never a word of complaint he walked the distance to a camp-fire and sat down. It was some little time before the surgeons tending the wounded, white and red, reached him. An operation was necessary. American Horse declined chloroform in the teepee to which he had been removed. He had his own palliative. He spoke a few words to his wife, who scuttled out and returned with a short piece of hard wood. This he thrust between his teeth; he motioned to the surgeons to proceed.

During the terrible work upon him the sweat stood out upon his forehead, he bit deeply into the stick, but he uttered never a groan, nor did he flinch. As he well knew, the wound was mortal; but he insisted upon sitting up, until, just before dawn, he fell back—he died as silently as he had suffered. He was man and Indian to the end.

The annals of the plains are filled with heroism, but there is no instance more striking in bare simplicity and naked fortitude than this end of American Horse who fought the good fight and lost.

By the Grace of Allah

by George E. Holt

Author of "The Case of Israel Ibn Ibrahim," "The See-Saw of Fate," etc.

An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali

"There is no might and power save the might and power of Allah."—*El Koran.*

"He who loves my child sets for me a crown upon his head."—*Moroccan Proverb.*

THE person of Mohamed Ali was greatly desired by a number of people. This was in that day in Morocco when the country was still very much as it was a thousand years ago—was not policed and patrolled and supervised and inspected and generally wet-nursed by Europe—and things happened. Some of these things had been made to happen by Mohamed Ali.

Wherefore, Mohamed Ali, having attempted the capture of a British subject, to be used as a pawn in the chess-game which he was then playing with men and events, together with other acts which had merit in his own eyes, but none in the eyes of his enemies, was honored by having a price set upon his head.

The sultan wanted him for having rather manifestly wiggled his fingers before his nose at the majesty and power of the shareefian throne; the Basha of Tangier wanted him for having brought recriminations upon the bashadorial head, and the British government, through its chief diplomatic officer, his excellency Sir Mortimer Jones, desired to teach him not to play pranks upon the sacred bodies of British subjects.

But although he was thus so greatly in demand, Mohamed Ali was very shy. Despite the temptation of reward, no native had shot him while he slept and thereafter carried his head to the Basha of Tangier. This latter was not entirely because of admiration for the bandit who had made snouts at the Commander of the Faithful and pulled the tail of the British lion. Somewhat, perhaps—but what would be the use of a competence when Mohamed Ali's kindred and followers undoubtedly would kill one expeditiously and completely?

Now you must know that Morocco of those days was a survival of the land of the Arabian Nights, and that the veneer of civilization put upon it by Europe—at whose very threshold it lies—was so thin that a little scratching of it broke through and brought one to the ancient times of Moses and Abraham, and queer things were to be observed. Allah is very close to the people, as God was to the people of old, and his hand is desired and expected in all things.

The virtuous people of Europe have been trying for many centuries to show the Moors the fallacy of this, to convince them that God is really very august and unapproachable and scornful of such small matters, instead of being a sort of a wise and affectionate grandfather. But the Moor has

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answered with "Allah is great" and continued to thrust upon his attention all matters from the salvation of a soul to the sore eyes of a child.

Wherefore the prophecies of Europe, that such infidels can not continue upon the earth, is being verified. Although more slowly than Christendom would like. And so the native belief in the nearness and in the might and power of Allah is a very dynamic one.

The relevance of all this to the matter in hand was that Mohamed Ali, despite the price upon his head and the thirsting sword of his enemies, was at peace with Allah and trusted very greatly in his wisdom and protection. Assuredly, Allah, being all powerful, would not have permitted an act of which he did not approve. Having thus stamped it with his smile, his protection—and particularly in case of an act inimical to the *Nasrene*—was to be looked for as a matter of fact. What he had ordained in the very Beginning of Things had come to be in its own time and place. *Maktoob.* What is written must be.

THEREFORE Mohamed Ali, clothed in a rather dirty brown *djellaba* instead of the immaculate white *sulham* he commonly wore, and with a soiled and crumpled turban twisted carelessly about his head, lay contentedly in a little stone-walled, thatch-roofed hut not a dozen miles from Tangier and played with a fat-cheeked girl-child, the three-year-old daughter of the honest farmer and his wife whose house it was.

Mohamed Ali was a very big man and a very strong one, with a black pointed beard and heavy black eyebrows, and he could look very fierce on occasion. Such as when, with a pistol in each hand and a knife between his teeth, he guided by knee pressure his racing horse through the crowded market-place of Tangier in search of an enemy who had been seen there.

But now his eyes were brown and lazy and his smile was gentle as the little one pulled his black beard or rubbed the silver hilt of the *kumiah* which hung in its curved sheath under his left arm-pit and made love to him as only a girl-baby can. And Mohamed Ali, having some three or four children of his own, safely housed away in the inaccessible mountains of the Rif, understood every word of her love-making and answered her in kind.

Came a day when Mohamed Ali saw that the cheeks were too red, and the eyes too bright, and he felt the girl's face with his big gentle hand and was ill at ease. He spoke to the child's mother and things were done, but the cheeks grew redder, and the eyes heavy, and Habiba no longer desired to play with the big man.

Now Habiba's father and mother were simple people who likewise believed in the nearness of Allah and in his beneficence. True, their other children had died in the typhus epidemic of a few years before, but obviously such had been the will of Allah, for he had ignored the charms which the village priest had written upon paper, and which the children had chewed and swallowed. But Mohamed Ali, having been, in his short but full life and before he became a bandit, an important *basha*, accustomed to the European society and civilization of Tangier, knew that while Allah might permit such a charm to cure, he had given his children medicines which were much more infallible. Wherefore he listened without enthusiasm while the priest talked his patter, and with dissatisfaction watched the writing and swallowing of the charm. Also he thought at some length of the two English medical missionaries who lived near the British Legation in Tangier. He knew them, and he knew also their goodness and ability.

Habiba grew worse, and at sunset Mohamed Ali knew it for pneumonia. Habiba looked at him without recognition.

Mohamed Ali thought of his own children many times, and he thought of the medical missionaries repeatedly, and he thought of his Majesty the Sultan and the *basha* and the British Minister just once. Then, "There is no might and power save the might and power of Allah," said Mohamed Ali to himself, and he clapped his hand, and when the father of Habiba came in answer, ordered that the best horse in the village be brought him without delay. Also that Habiba be wrapped warmly in one of her mother's *haiks*.

Habiba's father wondered much, and the headman, whose horse was requisitioned, would have liked to object. But neither had yet lived his allotted span and so neither asked questions nor raised obstacles. The face of Mohamed Ali indicated even to the slow-witted that silence and quick obedience were most laudable things at the moment.

MOHAMED ALI swung into the saddle, and the big horse swerved beneath his weight. Habiba's father handed him the white bundle which was Habiba. Then, and not till then—when the white bundle was tightly clasped in Mohamed Ali's arms—did the father ask whither his guest traveled.

"To Tangier," replied Mohamed Ali. "To the English doctors."

"But—they will hold you!" exclaimed the father. "You forget. The price upon your head!"

Mohamed Ali damned that view of the matter. Also, "There is no might and power save the might and power of Allah," he rumbled as he dug spur into the horse's belly.

And so in the moonlight Mohamed Ali rode into Tangier with a silent white bundle held to his breast. The cobbles leaped beneath his horse's feet as he clattered past the British Legation and came to the house of the medical missionaries. Into the arms of Miss Brown he put the child and stood silent while she opened the bundle and looked at the girl. Then she called another.

Mohamed Ali turned toward the door, and at that moment there was the clatter of horse's feet upon the stones, voices, a rap. Miss Brown called "Enter." The door swung open and in stepped his excellency Sir Mortimer Jones. First he saw the unconscious form of Habiba in the missionary's arms. Then he saw the face of Mohamed Ali.

Now, Sir Mortimer was not the king's envoy because he was a fool, and he read the explanation of the tableau even before Miss Brown explained it—or part of it—ending with:

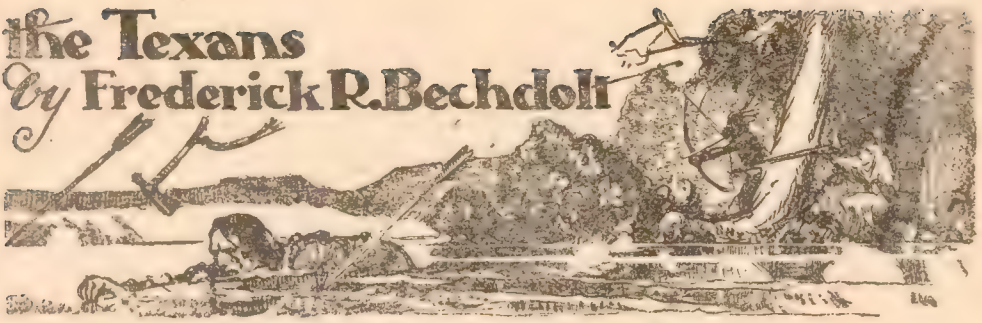
"I do not know this man, but that makes no difference. We can save the child, I think."

Sir Mortimer smiled twice; once at Miss Brown and once at Mohamed Ali. Then, as the ladies left the room with Habiba, Sir Mortimer stepped toward Mohamed Ali and held out his hand. And shortly thereafter a figure with the hood of its *djellaba* dropped carelessly over its face rode beside Sir Mortimer to the place on the Fez road where the city ends and the country begins. There they parted.

Mohamed Ali assured Sir Mortimer that Allah would repay his magnanimity. Which Allah did later with the help of one Mohamed Ali. Sir Mortimer gurgled quietly to himself in the privacy of the Legation the following day. But he did not include an account of the matter in his communications to the king. He could scarcely have done so without admitting, in one way or another, that there is no might and power save the might and power of Allah. Which would have been heresy and, for all I know, treason as well.

the Texans

by Frederick R. Bechdolt



Author of "The First Cowboy," "The Last of the Open Ranges," etc.

SOONER or later, if you listen to the tales of the Old-Timers, a fact is going to impress itself upon you. Throughout the West, wherever there was much fighting, there were Texans.

With only a few exceptions that rule held good from the Yellowstone to the Rio Grande. No matter what the conflict, range war or mining feud or battle with the Indians, the smell of burning powder seemed to draw these men, and they were never satisfied until they were right in the thick of it. Sometimes they came to help the big cowmen, and sometimes they cast their fortunes with the small settlers; they rode with the outlaws and they made brave sheriffs; that was all according to their moral fiber and the luck which controls men's destinies. Of one thing, however, you may be certain—where the lead was flying, they were. And usually they were giving a good account of themselves.

There were men of Texas on both sides throughout the Lincoln County War; Panhandle boys helped Pat Garret to capture Billy the Kid; John W. Poe of Mobeetie was with the cold-eyed sheriff when he killed the desperado. During Dodge City's wildest days the redoubtable Bat Masterson ruled the camp with an iron hand; but Clay Allison of the Washita and his cowboys once drove him and his shotgun squad to cover.

In Abilene Wild Bill Hickok fought several of his grimmest battles against riders who had come northward with trail herds from the Rio Grande. During their various campaigns against the Indians, Crook, Miles and Custer used Texans in nearly every civilian scouting-party. While Tombstone boomed, John Ringo and Curly Bill, who had served their apprenticeships during cattle wars in the Lone Star State, led the outlaws; and John Slaughter, the sheriff who eventually brought law and order into Cochise County, came from Maverick County.

Glanton and his scalp-hunters, who left a bloody trail all along the Mexican border from El Paso to Jeagers Ferry, where Yuma stands today beside the turbid Colorado, were Texans. So was Captain Harry Love who, when Joaquin Murietta had terrorized all California, took charge of affairs and hunted down the famous guerrilla chief to his death. One could go on at length in this manner and enumerate most of the noteworthy struggles on the frontier.

What caused this breed? In other lands such races have been glorified, and we Americans have learned their deeds by rote on the pages of histories. Yet schoolbooks at the most but hint at the bold chronicle of that Commonwealth down by the Rio Grande whose sons for more than half a century were continually at strife with Mexicans and hostile savages, performing exploits in contrast to which many of the more famous tales make pallid reading. One must delve into obscure volumes to get an idea of the long list of struggles which filtered out the cowards and left this brave strain.

To outline that history ever so briefly from the time when Moses Austin brought the first colonists to the Brazos River in 1821 on through the early Indian wars, the bitter border fighting against Mexico when Texas was a nation, the succeeding periods of Comanche raiding and range wars, would demand a thick volume. During those fifty years there was always a frontier—a thin line of homes moving slowly westward from the Sabine River

"The Texans," copyright, 1922, by F. R. Bechdolt.

past the Nueces, the Trinity and the Cross Timbers, on across the Llano Estacado. Roads, cities and the comfortable conditions of modern civilization followed close behind.

But the men who owned these cabins carried firearms because they had to; the rifle was as much a part of one's daily life as the clothes which he wore; women understood its use; boys learned to line its sights before they learned to read. For if one could not slay adeptly there was always the chance that one might not live the day through.

So, to face death became looked upon as an incident—a part of life's routine. Men took it calmly and remembered to pull down their sights while the enemy's lead was snarling past their ears, which was usually very bad for those who had come forth to kill them.

There were intervals in that period when husbands and sons left their homes to embark on expeditions into a hostile country or to defend their own land against invasion. Then such exploits were performed as demand large space for the telling. But this is a tale of a few of the things which took place in the ordinary course of events; things which happened to men and women while they were going about their daily work, as it were.

AWAY back in the days of the early settlements the sires of this fighting stock became hardened to the fierce, hot toil of deadly combat and lost that diffidence which the ordinary man feels when he looks into the face of Death. There were several colonies then, each with its grant of land along some river.

The men and women for the most part came from frontier families and had moved West when the first threat of civilization menaced the wilderness east of the Mississippi. Here in Texas they broke the prairie sod; they plowed farmlands; they lived in log cabins; they dressed in a mixture of homespun and smoke-tanned buckskin; they wore moccasins more frequently than boots; venison was more common on their tables than beef.

Of this breed was Adam Lawrence—Ad Lawrence, as men called him—who was dwelling on the east bank of the Trinity River near its head waters in the Summer of 1832. He was a daring rider and a great lover of horses; so when he located his claim on the river he went to catching wild mustangs and breaking them, thus making a good living, since every settler needed ponies. He was an adept with the riata, which remained for some years afterward more or less of a novelty among the Texans; and men used to marvel at the skill with which he swung the rawhide loop.

Ad Lawrence's cabin was the uttermost outpost of the white man in that section. The Comanches were beginning to make their first forays along the Trinity in the Summer of 1832; but if a man allowed the presence of hostile Indians to interfere with his work in those days he would live an idle life indeed.

So the young horse-hunter went about his business as usual. He had a brush or two with the savages but managed to get away with a whole skin, leaving his toll of dead men behind him.

One morning he rode forth with three companions to seek wild ponies on the prairies west of the stream. The names of the other men have not come down with the story, and it was their luck to fall so early in the affair that the lack is not noticeable; but one finds himself wishing that he knew the name of the black mare which carried Ad Lawrence. There are those living who have heard her owner tell years afterward of what she did that Summer's day, and they say that his voice shook with feeling when he spoke of her.

Beyond the Trinity lay the land of the Comanches. The four men crossed the stream and rode out for ten miles across the rolling prairie.

Some time about the middle of the afternoon they caught sight of a band of mustangs. They slipped behind a rise of land to leeward of the herd and came slowly up the wind, until they had climbed the intervening slope. As they settled in their saddles to make the final dash, the Comanches who owned those ponies sprang from the deep grass where the herd was grazing.

The situation developed in the time it would take a man to lower his eyelid—one hundred mustangs, each with its slender rawhide tether, and at the end of every strand a warrior. There was a stirring in the herd, a flashing of bare bronze bodies in the sunlight, and the white men whirled their horses in full flight.

They leaned low in their saddles and raced

to keep beyond arrow range, while a chorus of shrill, ululating yells rose behind them, to die away and be succeeded by the drumming of hoofs on the prairie sod. So for three miles, and they were beginning to think that they would distance the savages when they topped one of the grassy undulations and saw the trap into which their pursuers were driving them.

A quarter of a mile or so ahead of them a steep-banked gully cut straight athwart their course. To cross it faster than at a walk would be impossible. There was only one chance—to go around it by the head. And the Indians had already split into two parties, the larger of which was drawing off to the left to block the single route to safety, while the others came whooping down upon the Texans from behind.

Now Lawrence and his companions turned toward that goal; and three of them spurred their horses. But the black mare needed no steel. When her rider leaned forward and spoke her name she settled her belly lower, and it seemed as if her hoofs barely touched the earth, she ran so lightly.

It was a short dash, less than half a mile at the outside. As they neared the finish line pursuers and pursued were drawing close together on their converging courses. The Indians were quirting their ponies to the last high pitch of endeavor, lying along the sleek backs like jockeys on the home stretch.

Ad Lawrence saw them crowding down upon him—and then the brief vision passed behind. A cloud of arrows came droning around him. An outburst of shrill yells filled his ears. The mare's stride lengthened and he got a glimpse of greener grass, of wild rose-bushes, and he felt the jolt of broken ground beneath the mare's feet. He was passing the goal line.

He glanced back to see how his companions had fared. Their horses were running riderless across the prairie. He was alone.

He settled down for the longer race that lay before him; seven miles to the river and the cabins of the settlers. He eased the mare to a slower stride. An arrow had lodged in her neck just in front of the withers; another was sticking in his buckskin coat, holding it outspread against the wind. During the next mile he freed his arms from the sleeves and let the garment fall. He leaned forward in the saddle and jerked the barbed shaft from the animal.

The Comanches had dallied to finish their three victims. But when he had covered another mile he saw how one was drawing on before the others; and in the third mile from the coulée's head he glanced behind once more to find the solitary rider gaining fast upon him.

The mare was breathing heavily. The blood from the arrow wound was spreading downward, staining her shoulder and the foreleg.

"Old girl," he said, "I'm going to leave you; get your wind."

His rifle was gone—how he had lost it the story does not say as it has come down from the lips of the old-timers—and he had only his bowie-knife. He pulled up, swung from the saddle, loosed the cinch and turned to face the savage.

He was a young buck, resplendent in the war-path's panoply. In the chase back there by the gully's source he had shot away his last arrow. He drew his pony up on its haunches, and, leaping from its back, ran lightly on through the high grass, his long knife in his hand, to meet the white man.

Ad Lawrence stood with bowed head and sagging shoulders, his whole body drooping as with a great weariness, and the confidence of unwearied youth flamed from the warrior's eyes as he closed in. His arm rose, and the knife-blade glistened in the hot sunshine.

In the instant while the bowie hung poised, Ad Lawrence cast from him that attitude of weariness. He sprang under the upflung arm and sank his own knife hilt-deep into the naked body.

Then he came back to the mare. Her flanks were heaving, and the sound of her breathing was like the sobbing of a woman. He stood beside her and watched the forms of the advancing riders growing larger on the prairie. At last he tightened the cinch again, kicked off his heavy boots and leaped upon her back.

But the loss of blood and the handicap of the saddle's weight was beginning to tell on her now. The ponies of the Indians were gaining fast when Lawrence saw the thin dark line of the timber by the Trinity. Then for the first time that day he touched his mare with the spur.

He drew away from the Indians, but before he reached the first fringe of trees they were closing in upon him again. He spurred the black mare for the second time. She tore onward through the thicket, giving the last of the strength that was in her and, bursting through the last barrier, reached the river's brink.

The bank was more than fifteen feet high and dropped off sheer. No horse in Texas had ever made a leap like that. Yet she did not falter when she saw it, but sprang straight out.

The stream ran deep. Ad Lawrence felt the current closing over him. After what seemed a long time she rose to the surface with him and struck out. A swarm of arrows buzzed past them. When they reached the middle of the river the black mare uttered a groan—and sank like lead.

Ad Lawrence freed his feet from the stirrups and swam to the eastern bank. For some time he stood there watching the current, hoping against hope that the mare might appear once more. At last the danger of the Comanches finding a crossing elsewhere drove him from the place, and he made his way afoot to the cabin of the nearest settler. Away along in the seventies, when he was an old man, he used to tell the story of that day's escape, and when he came to the black mare's death his voice would always break a little.

IN THE early thirties Josiah Willbarger was living on the Colorado River with his wife and baby. He had built the first cabin in the neighborhood, and when other families began to follow he made a business of locating homeseekers, for he knew the country well and was able to take a man straight to any of the unlocated sections of good agricultural land.

One August day in 1833 he set forth on one of these expeditions with four companions—a surveyor by the name of Christian and three young fellows who were hunting claims. They left the cabin of Reuben Hornsby, which was the last building of the white man, and struck out on horseback into the wilderness.

Six or eight miles from the spot where men afterward built the State capital they were eating their lunch at noontime. Today a paved road passes within sight of that spot by Pecan Creek, and automobiles speed past in an endless procession.

The woods that covered the bottomland are gone, and there is no vestige of the brush which encircled the little open space where the five men were resting.

Their horses were grazing—two of them saddled and the others hobbled—when sixty Indians who had been stealing through the brush for the last hour, tightened their circle about the little party and burst into the open from all sides at once.

A pandemonium of shrill yells, a cloud of arrows—that was the first notice that the white men had of their danger. Christian lay with a broken thigh-bone. One of the homeseekers was dying with half a dozen feathered shafts in his body. His two companions leaped behind the nearest trees.

Willbarger ran to the surveyor, dragged him to a little oak, propped him against the trunk and placed a rifle in his hands. By the time he found cover three arrows had lodged in his limbs. Heedless of the wounds, he lay behind a log, lining his sights slowly, picking his target every time before he pulled the trigger.

The Indians had now vanished from the open. They were better armed than most tribes at the time. Occasionally a puff of smoke betrayed the hiding-place of one who had a smooth-bore musket. The sharp, buzz of arrows sounded on all sides.

This kept up for some time. Then one of the homeseekers managed to catch up the two saddled horses, and Willbarger looked around from where he lay behind his log just in time to see the pair mounting. He shouted at them; he might as well have saved his breath. They were off on

the dead run and never a look behind.

So he found himself alone with the helpless surveyor and the dying man—and a ring of Indians closing in upon them. He did the best he could. He got his hands upon Christian's rifle and with the two guns he was able to shoot fast enough to hold off the savages until a musket-ball creased him in the neck and left him paralyzed for the time being.

Then the Indians swarmed in. He saw them cut the throats of his two companions and scalp them. He beheld a warrior bending over him with an uplifted knife. Unable to move so much as an eyelash, he watched the blade descend. He felt the tug of fingers entwined in his hair. It seemed to him that he was blinded by a great flash of fire; and everything went from him in a roaring as of thunder.

Evening was pretty well along when he recovered consciousness. The temporary paralysis had passed. The wound where his scalp had been torn away was throbbing terribly; the arrows burned his limbs like shafts of living fire.

He managed to crawl to a little spring a mile away. Here he drank deeply, then sank down in a swoon beside the pool. The hours passed; the night was far along when he awakened. He crept toward the distant cabins of the settlers.

Meantime the two homeseekers had fled to the home of Reuben Hornsby, where they gave it out that the Indians had killed all of their companions. Riders were out that night, gathering a party to start after the dead at daybreak.

An hour or two before the dawn Hornsby's wife awakened him.

"Willbarger is alive," she said. "I just saw him, covered with blood, standing by an oak tree, begging for help."

She told the vision to the riders who came trooping to the cabin at sunrise, and that same morning the party came on Josiah Willbarger standing by a tree just as the woman had described him. They brought him to his home, and so tough was the fiber of the man that he recovered within a few weeks.

NOT far from the town of Belton is a place called Taylor's Valley, and in these days there are but few who have any idea whence that name came.

Here near the Three Forks of Little River, Joseph Taylor settled with his family during the early thirties and built one of those double cabins which became so common when the Texans began spreading through the West in later years. The structure was really two log buildings, each containing a single room, with an interval between and one roof covering the whole.

On a November night in 1835 a dozen or fifteen Indians stole in upon the clearing. They were in the brush down near the barn when the dog got wind of them and set up a loud barking. One of the savages slew the animal with an arrow almost as soon as he began; but the noise had already awakened Taylor and his wife.

The man leaped from his bed and ran to a window. It was bright moonlight, and as he peered through a loophole in the heavy wooden shutter he got sight of several moving forms near the barn.

Two daughters grown to womanhood were sleeping in this half of the house; two boys, the eldest thirteen and the other twelve, were in the other room. The mother ran to the door and threw it open; and as she stood there in the areaway between the buildings, calling her sons, the Indians opened fire upon her from the shelter of the thickets. They were all well armed; a good half of them had smoothbore muskets. The arrows and bullets rattled on the green logs around the woman, and a pandemonium of shrill war-yells rose above the noise of the firing.

She stuck to her post until the youngsters came to her. Then she hurried them into the room, slammed the door shut behind them and dragged a heavy table against it.

Over the door there was an aperture of several inches, for the cabin was newly built and not all the chinking was yet completed. The woman posted her twelve-year-old upon the table with a rifle. The other boy took a window near his father. The two girls had a fire going and were already at work molding bullets on the hearthstone.

The noise down in the thicket had died away now. For a long time there was no sound without; no form showed. Then the small boy on the table-top got sight of something stirring where the dark line of brush merged with the pool of moonlight half-way between the house and barn.

He waited in silence, straining his young eyes until the shape grew more distinct,

and he knew it was an Indian creeping on his belly toward the house. The rifle was longer than himself, but the top of the door made a good rest. He pressed his cheek against the walnut stock and lined his sights as carefully as if his target were a squirrel on a distant limb.

The weapon's sharp report brought his mother running to the table. He stood there waiting for the smoke to clear away, and then he turned to announce that he had got his first Indian.

Within a minute Taylor slew another warrior, who was squirming along the edge of the brush toward the dead form. Then the uproar began again in the thickets; the arrows and musket-balls were rattling briskly against the log walls.

Three or four Indians leaped out into the open. The thirteen-year-old son wounded one of them, and the forms of the others vanished in the shadows.

There was another interval of silence. The watchers at the windows were pressing their faces to the narrow loopholes when Mrs. Taylor heard a faint sound at the end of the room beside the fireplace. A bit of chinking was missing between the logs here. She glanced toward the spot and got a glimpse of two dark eyes outside the hole.

The shovel was lying on the hearth close by. She scooped it full of coals and flung its glowing contents through the aperture. The savage fled howling through the night.

Meantime the rest of the band had managed to steal up to the other end of the house, and within a few minutes the smell of smoke told the family of their new danger. A red light rose and spread until the whole clearing was a bright as day. Taylor turned to his wife.

"Do you take the two girls," he said. "The boys and I will keep them busy with our rifles while you make for the brush. There's a chance that you can slip away and save yourselves."

But the woman shook her head.

"I'd rather die here—and have the girls die—than run the risk of one of us being captured," she told him. "You stand them off from the windows as best you can. I'm going to put that fire out."

There was a barrel of home-made vinegar in the room. She bade the girls bring this and a half-dozen full milk-pans. Leaping to the top of the table, she broke away the shakes above her.

The building's logs were green. The fire had not yet spread to them. But the roof of the other room was all ablaze.

She thrust her head and shoulders through the hole. An outburst of savage voices made the night air hideous. The musket-balls and arrows pelted like hailstones all about her.

She stood there, taking the ladles and buckets which her daughters passed up to her. The breath of the flames was hot in her face as she began her fight against them. An arrow cut away a strand of her hair beside the temple; they found a half-dozen bullet-holes in her clothing afterward. The rifles of her husband and the two boys spoke slowly from the loopholed windows, and the war-yells began to dwindle in the thickets.

The fire was retreating now. She crept out on the roof and followed it until there remained but a glowing fringe of sparks.

That was the last of the attack. The Indians had given it up for a bad job and stolen away.

The family waited for an hour or two, and then the father and the boys stood guard upon the roof while the women cached the household valuables. That night they made their way afoot more than ten miles to the cabin of the nearest neighbor, where they told their story.

IN 1836, when Texas was fighting for her independence, the border tribes took advantage of the absence of men from many homes, and there was Indian warfare all along the thin fringe of cabins which marked the frontier. Women and children were carried off into captivity and sold to Comancheroes over on the Pecos River. Boys in their teens became seasoned veterans.

There was one of these young fellows by the name of Evan Faulkenberry, who stood beside his father at the Parker's Fort massacre and helped to hold off the Comanches while the other survivors of that bloody day retreated to the thickets in the river bottom, whence they made their way to the settlements. A year later this same boy died on the west bank of the Trinity as finely as one of Homer's old heroes.

There were four of them resting at noontime near the stream—the elder Faulkenberry, young Abram Anglin, who had been

through the Parker's Fort fight, a man by the name of Anderson and the boy Evan. Sixty Comanches stole upon them under cover of the brush in the bottom. The two men were fatally wounded at the first volley of the savages, but they leaped into the stream and swam across, and the next day a relief party found their bodies on the opposite bank.

The boys had managed to seize their rifles at the first alarm and to get behind trees, where they made so hot a fight of it that the Indians hung back for several minutes. Finally they made a rush. Young Anglin ran from tree to tree until he gained the bank, then dropped into the Trinity and swam to safety.

But the Comanches had surrounded Evan Faulkenberry. They struck him down. He bounded to his feet, and before they could lay hands on him again he had brained two of them with his clubbed rifle.

Then one, who had slipped up behind him, felled him, and a dozen of them hurled themselves upon his prostrate form. A warrior bent over him with bared knife. He was tearing away the scalp when the boy sprang from under him, burst through the ring of Indians and ran down to the river. They saw him strike out for the other bank; and when he had gained the middle of the stream he sank from their sight.

The Comanches were old men when they told the story, and the memory of many other battles had come between them and the incident. But they said to those who listened that they had never seen a warrior die so bravely as that boy did.

IT WAS during this period, while the young nation was fighting for its life against invading Mexican armies, that the Texan Rangers were organized. Their duty was to defend the border settlements.

The captains were seasoned veterans. Most of them had served through the revolution, and during the ten years following the fall of the Alamo there was not a month when one or more of them did not have his men in the field. So there grew up now along that fringe of cabins which marked the frontier, a race of warriors who became as adept at tracking, surprize and ambush as the savages with whom they were contending.

And from this time on the Indian-fighting began to take on a new aspect. Formerly it had been every family or group of settlers for itself. Henceforth, when the alarm was given, all the available men in the countryside turned out, mounted and equipped, to hurry to the scene of the latest outrage and follow the trail of the savages until they overtook them.

What had been purely defensive tactics changed more and more with the passage of the years to the offensive, until in the end the Texans were on the aggressive, and the hostile tribes were fugitives who wandered over the Llano Estacado, raiding when they got the chance and fleeing after every raid into the arid reaches of that vast wilderness.

This turning-point in border history was marked by a long series of terriffic battles; for the Comanches, the Kiowas and the Apaches were the flower of the Southwest's red warriors, and their chiefs realized that, once they gave up, their hunting-grounds were gone forever. Two things above all else defeated them—the resourcefulness of the white men and their marvelous ability as marksmen. They learned the game of savage warfare until they knew it better than the savages themselves.

There were some of those old ranger captains, like Jack Hayes, John Moore, Erath, "Big-Foot" Wallace, Matthew Caldwell and Shapeley B. Ross, whose lists of forays and grim stands against odds were as long as those of the most famous Indian chiefs. There were hundreds of men in settlements who worked hard on their farms in times of peace and went to the meeting-house on Sundays, but who, when they were on the war-path, took the scalps of their dead enemies as eagerly as any Comanche.

John Bird was one of those early Ranger captains. There is a creek in Bell County, not far from Taylor's Valley, which was named for him. Years afterward men came to its banks to see the bullet-scarred trees where his little company of thirty fought against odds of ten to one and killed twice their own number of Comanches on a May afternoon in 1839.

At that time old Fort Griffin marked the extreme western edge of the frontier, just as the other Fort Griffin did two decades later. It stood on Little River, a log stockade built by the family whose

name it bore. They and their neighbors used it as a place of refuge during Indian raids.

For six months before this fight the Comanches had been swooping down on the settlements along the Brazos, and finally Captain Bird came thither with his Rangers. When they arrived at the blockhouse they found a number of families within its walls. A band of hostiles had been hovering about the place within the last two hours.

The Rangers rode right on, and they cut the trail of the Comanches a few miles away. They followed it out across the rolling prairie, and in a short time they came on a band of thirty savages skinning some buffaloes. The Texans charged, and the Comanches fled across the prairie.

Five miles or so farther on they made a brief stand on a little rise of land, but scattered once more with the rangers following hot after them. Finally, when he saw that the horses were getting jaded, Captain Bird gave the order to halt, and the company turned back toward Fort Griffin.

It was getting on near the middle of the afternoon when they reached the creek which was named for their commander. They stopped here to water their horses, and when the animals had drunk their fill they started on again, a straggling procession winding through the brushy bottomland. As the foremost riders were emerging from the timber, forty Comanches who had been lying there in the thickets waiting for them, opened fire.

The ambuscade was well chosen, and the volley caught the Texans off their guard. A good third of the company was out in the open, and the others were badly separated in the dense brush. But before the first war-whoop had fairly died away, while the arrows were buzzing past them and shots were sounding on all sides of them, the white men bunched about their leader and listened to his orders.

Here where they were, the slope was gentle; but five hundred yards away the land broke more sharply from the creek bottom, and the steep banks of a tributary ravine offered them good cover if they could but reach it.

"We'll head for that," Bird told them.

By this time the Comanches had closed in behind them and had them completely surrounded. Between his place and the spot which the captain had selected the circle was tightest. But when he gave the word the Texans charged so fiercely that they broke through on the dead run.

They raced on across the open ground beyond. They reached the gully's brink and threw themselves from the saddles. Four of the younger men took the horses into the bed of the ravine. The others settled down under the bank to make their stand.

They lay scattered along the slope while the naked riders sped back and forth across the open prairie just beyond easy range, trying to draw their fire. Some were busy looking to their primings. Two or three old-timers who had come into the country with Moses Austin away back in the days when Lafitte and his freebooters were holding Galveston Island, bit fresh chews from their twisted plugs of home-grown tobacco as men who are about to begin a long day's work.

One of the naked riders swung in closer than his companions, and a smooth-cheeked boy, eager to bag his first Indian, took a long shot at the speeding target. A leathern-faced veteran, asprawl along the slope beside him, shook his head.

"Save your powder," he growled. "You'll get more shooting than you want directly."

A raw-boned fellow whose lank hair hung beyond his ears was tugging at an arrow embedded in his thigh. He cursed the missile in a drawling monotone.

"Here," he bade his neighbor, "lend me a hand."

And while the other dug the point out with his knife-blade the blood made a widening dark circle on the rent buckskin breeches.

Captain Bird lay under the brink of the bank conferring with his lieutenant, James Robinnet, a young German farmer from the Trinity. The eyes of the two were on the riders who were racing back and forth across the open grass lands. And now these began to draw away toward a low hill, until the whole band vanished behind it.

"Going to hold council," the old-timers told the younger men.

Ten minutes dragged by. Many of the Texans began scraping out shallow rifle-pits under the bank's lee with their butcher-knives. A thin thread of smoke arose from the hilltop. The greenest boy in the company knew what that smoke meant.

Within an hour a long line of Indians

appeared across the prairie. As they came on some of the company began counting. All hands agreed that there were more than three hundred warriors.

They rode to within a quarter of a mile and halted while a few of their number advanced to reconnoiter, and then the whole company turned. They went up to the hilltop.

Five minutes passed. A single warrior rode out before the Comanches, passing along the entire length of their line—a thick-set man mounted on a fine, big American horse. Suddenly he raised his hand, and the three hundred swept down the hill's flank.

The leader came before them all. The Texans saw his gaudy war-bonnet with a pair of polished bison horns over his brow, and they knew that they had to do battle with old Buffalo Hump, the greatest of the Southwestern chiefs.

The line reached the foot of the slope and sped on across the level. Through the haze of dust which eddied before it like rising smoke, obscuring the forms of the ponies and their riders, the war-whoop arose, shrill, ululating, while the thunder of the hoofs came as a deep undernote. The Texans lay silent at the gully's edge.

At last their rifles began talking in their flat, dry voices, like old men who choose every word with slow deliberation before giving it utterance. Sometimes two or three reports would come in unison; then there would be a brief interval of silence; and after that a series of solitary shots.

A riderless pony broke away from the advancing line; a sudden confusion of forms showed in another quarter. The smooth continuity of the front was gone. Some of the warriors were swerving their ponies. Confusion came.

The rattle of the rifles at the gully's edge grew brisker. The charge had turned to a headlong retreat. A few forms lay asprawl upon the flat. A pony was kicking the reddened grass in his death agony.

The Comanches re-formed on the hilltop. Within five minutes they came on again. The Rangers waited as before; and as before they fired with slow deliberation.

But this time the sight of the riderless ponies seemed only to spur on the survivors. It seemed as if they were going to ride down upon the white men and trample them under foot. And then they wavered and fled the second time.

Three wounded men were moaning for water under the bank. Captain Bird was dying from four arrow wounds. James Robinnet, the young farmer from the Trinity, took the command.

The Comanches re-formed and made a third charge; but in the moment of their starting it was easy to see that their hearts were not in the movement. This time instead of riding back to the summit they went around the hill to hold another council.

While the Texans waited, Robinnet told off three men to drag the wounded down to a spring in the ravine's bed and leave them there. That was the best they could do for them, for there were only twenty-five able to fight now.

Ten minutes or so passed, and then the Indians came on in two bodies. When they were within rifle-shot the warriors of both wings wheeled their ponies, riding across the flank of the Texans and firing under the necks of their mounts as they swept by. But the long-barreled rifles broke such gaps in their ranks as were beyond their endurance and they retired once more.

"Next time they come," young Robinnet said to those about him, "I'm going to get that chief."

He crept out into the long grass before the bank and lay there with his rifle; and when the two wings were sweeping down upon them he waited until the form of the chief came out of the dust-haze within one hundred yards. Then he pressed the trigger, and the red leader slid from the bare back of his pony with a bullet-hole fairly between the two buffalo horns in his forehead.

Even as the Comanche ranks were breaking into full flight a dozen bucks swooped in upon the body and bore it off. That was the end of the battle. The Rangers waited under the bank all that night, and in the morning they rode away to Fort Griffin, taking with them their dead and wounded. In after years the Indians acknowledged that they had lost something like sixty warriors.

THEY say a man grows accustomed to anything. These early Rangers grew so used to fighting against odds of ten to one that they took it as a matter of course and devoted themselves to straight shooting just as a good workman devotes himself to adept handling of his tools when

things are coming faster than usual on the job.

They were deadly men with their weapons; there is no doubt about that. In the Fall of 1840 Colonel John Moore and ninety followers charged a Comanche village on the Colorado and slew more than one hundred and thirty warriors in an hour's battle.

That same year Captain Jack Hays and twenty men overtook two hundred Comanches who had been raiding the settlements near San Antonio. The Indians made a stand at the crossing of the Guadalupe River, but although they had the advantage of good cover these twenty-one Texans routed them and killed some thirty-odd, including the chief.

Shapeley B. Ross was a typical Indian-fighter of those times. He was a pioneer of Milam County and lived near the spot where the town of Cameron stands today.

In 1842 he slew the famous Comanche chief, Big Foot, and the tale of that battle reads like a page from one of Cooper's *Leatherstocking* series. This Big Foot was a seasoned old marauder, and the list of his raids was a long one. He stood something over six feet in his moccasins, and there were any number of stories of his enormous strength and his skill in combat.

One day Ross and his nephew, Shapeley Woolfolk, were pursuing a band of Indians who had been on a horse-stealing expedition, and they came upon them during a terrific rainstorm at a place which men called the Knobs, a bit of broken country not far from where the town of Temple afterward grew up.

The rain had dampened the primings of the old-style rifles, and at the very outset the affair resolved itself into a series of single combats. How the other members of the Ranger party fared has not come down with the story. Ross and his nephew had singled out the chief and were riding toward him, the former well in the lead.

Big Foot saw the Ranger captain and turned tke stolen horse which he was riding, to meet the charge. The pair raced for each other in very much the same fashion as the knights used to do in the old tourneys.

The Indian was swinging his war-club; the white man, his clubbed rifle. As the two horses came together Big Foot's weapon descended, but in the very moment of the collision Ross reined aside so skilfully that the blow missed. Before the chief could recover his balance the Ranger captain swung his rifle over his shoulder as a man would swing an ax.

In that same instant a Comanche brave, who had ridden up behind him, thrust for Ross with his lance. Young Woolfolk was already charging down upon the buck. Just as Ross's blow was at the turning-point—and as the warrior's lance was plunging toward the former's body—the nephew's horse struck the Comanche's pony.

So it came that the point of the lance merely grazed Ross' ribs. The wound caused his blow to waver. Old Big Foot reined off to one side.

Woolfolk and the Comanche went down with their ponies, and the warrior was on his feet almost as soon as he struck the ground. He leaped up behind the chief, and the two of them rode away at headlong speed.

Young Woolfolk swung back into the saddle and caught up with his uncle, who was already spurring after them. The race went for something like a half-mile over broken country. The pursuers were gaining fast; they were within fifty feet of the fugitives, when the horse and its two riders plunged over the brink of a steep limestone bluff.

Woolfolk saw them vanish among the gray sheets of driving rain, as suddenly as if the earth had swallowed them; and before he realized what had happened, his horse and he were somersaulting to the bottom. Ross managed to pull up. He flung himself from the saddle and slid down the little cliff.

Old Big Foot turned to meet him. Their knives were out. Now they closed in; and, as they wrestled, each gripping the other's right wrist with the left hand, it seemed for a moment as if the Comanche was going to have the best of it.

Suddenly he wrenched his arm free. The knife flew up. Then, just as the movement reached its consummation, the chief slipped backward in the wet grass. Ross tore his right hand free and plunged his knife hilt deep into the naked body.

He was—so he used to say in later years when he told the story—utterly spent; his head was reeling when the body crumpled to the earth before him. He staggered off to one side in time to see his nephew scalping the warrior with whom meantime he had been at death grips.

BIG FOOT WALLACE got his nickname from this famous chief, whom he followed a dozen times but never had the luck to kill. Wallace was a typical Texan of the old breed. He came from Virginia when he was a lad, to find that his elder brother who had preceded him into the country had been killed at Goliad with Fannin's men.

The list of his exploits against the hostile Indians is too long for this chronicle. Between times he took part in the ill-fated Mier expedition, slaying his good share of Mexicans in the battle on the Alcantra, running his chances with the other prisoners in the black-bean lottery at the Hacienda Salado, to come back across the Rio Grande at last and return to warfare with the red men until the Mexican War gave him another chance at Santa Anna. Afterward he took a stage-route contract in the Big Bend country where the Comanches were trying to drive the company out of business and helped to clear the route of hostiles.

One day when this Big Foot Wallace was getting pretty well on in years, he cut the trail of a band of Indians near Seven Rivers. He was alone at the time, but he followed the tracks, for there was a high hill just ahead and he wanted to see which direction the band had taken on the other side. He reached the summit; and there they were, not more than a hundred yards ahead of him, sixty warriors and a bunch of stolen horses.

His own mount was jaded. He had not a chance in a race against them. It was such a moment as some famous heroes of olden days would have chosen for dying beautifully.

But perhaps death had become commonplace to Big Foot Wallace through close association, and its prospect brought no appeal. At any rate he chose to live, and so he did some quick thinking. Before the Indians had more than caught sight of him he was spurring his horse to a dead run straight toward them. And as he charged he waved his hat.

"Come on, boys! Now we've got them!" he shouted.

They did not even stop to round up the stolen ponies, and he drove the herd back to their owners that same evening.

THESE are a few of the things which the men and women did who settled Texas. They were but incidents of the life in those early days—incidents which took place, as it were, between times. For the generation which performed these and a multitude of other exploits was the same generation which fought at the Alamo and Goliad and San Jacinto; the generation which gave us the story of the Mier expedition and the Republic of the Rio Grande.

From that generation sprang the sons who wandered over the West in the days before the barbed-wire fences and the railroads, to show themselves wherever there was fighting.

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

A WORD from John Joseph in connection with his story in this issue:

I have put this tale in the language of the best old-timer story-teller I ever ran across. It is partly founded on fact. *Windy Sam* was a very real person—ran across him in the Mormon Basin country in 1896, living (?) in a rotten tent beside a little creek, where he had been so long that his wagon had actually collapsed and lay on the ground beside the tent. He died five or six years back, and there was some sort of a row over the gold they found buried in the tent. Forty thousand was the amount, according to the account, but it was all hearsay and I can not vouch for it.—JOHN JOSEPH.

COLLECTING data on the Old West is a valuable and needed service. Our Camp-Fire has been doing it for years, and helping others do it. Starting a new department always gives us pause. Quite a few of 'em already. We figure that those departments already take as much time and work as all the remainder of the magazine. Yes, I know they look easy and simple, but try handling them. And each of 'em takes some space.

That data ought to be collected though, for its historical value as well as its general interest. Maybe something can be worked out. I'll talk it over with comrade Watson and will any of you who have suggestions send them in?

And here is something about Nellie Cashman and the notorious Benders:

University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois.

For the Camp Fire: *In re* the inquiry at the Camp-Fire about the notorious Bender family, here is a clipping from one of my many scrap-books which may give the information desired.

As to Nellie Cashman, the famous woman sourdough, I have several clippings too long to reproduce at Camp-Fire, I reckon. However, if the inquirer cares to write to me I'll be glad to send him copies of all the clippings and I think they will give him pretty complete information about her. She was living as late as December, 1919, when she left Alaska for the States to offer her services as a Red Cross war-worker.

WHICH moves me to put a proposition before Camp-Fire. Why not add a service for the exchange of notes on frontier history, *i. e.* a sort of clearing house for information seekers, to the

"Ask Adventure" service? To explain the proposition more clearly I'll risk seeming to push forward the first person singular. For 20 years I've been collecting dope on frontier history (Note to Uncle Frank Huston: Yes, I'm a "book farmer and closet naturalist") and I now have several thousand books, magazine articles, newspaper clippings and photographs on such subjects as Scouts, Pioneers, Frontiersmen, Indians, Indian Fighters, Bandits, Prospectors, Cowboys, Peace Officers, Hunters, Trappers, Fur Traders, Explorers, Historical Weapons, etc. not to mention a lot of letters from men who come under the above classification or knew intimately those who do.

If there is any one who would care to write to me about any particular person or thing in that list, I'd be glad to send him a copy of any clipping I have on the subject or a digest of the information. Just at present I'm working such an exchange with a man out in Kansas who is a specialist on information about noted bandits and outlaws and we're finding it mutually helpful. So that's the proposition. All that would be necessary is publication of names and addresses of men who are willing to contribute information (count me in), with perhaps a notation of the subject in which he is a specialist (as in "Ask Adventure") and let the correspondence be direct. No responsibility for the magazine, no charge except the two-cent stamp for reply. Can't this be done, Keeper of the Camp-Fire?—ELMO SCOTT WATSON.

The clipping follows:

In 1873 the West was startled by the atrocities of the murdering Benders, a gang of cutthroat butchers who kept an inn on a lonely road leading from Parsons to Cherryvale, Kas. The Benders, a family of Hollanders, settled on this claim in 1871. The family consisted of John Bender, 60 years old, his wife, about 55 years old, Kate, 23, and a young man about the same age, the relation of whom was uncertain. Travelers suspected of having valuables or possessing good outfits were killed while eating their meals in the dining-room. The chair of the traveler was placed in front of a thin curtain which separated the two compartments of the house. A blow with a club or ax from a member of the family behind the thin partition ended the victim. All valuables were then taken and the body dropped to the cellar through a trap-door. At night the bodies were removed from this cellar and buried in a rude grave in the back yard.

The work of human butchery was carried on for some time without discovery. In May, 1873, Silas Tate was passing the place. He reported its deserted appearance to L. F. Dick, township trustee, who in company with a man named York began an investigation. York's brother, Dr. William York of Independence, Kas., had disappeared while endeavoring to find out what had become of a man named Longoer and a little girl. As Dick and York entered the house they were met with an unbearable stench. The trap-door was discovered and opened and beneath in a pit six feet deep was a pool of blood. In the back yard the graves were discovered and the bodies of Doctor York, Longoer and the little girl, besides those of four others, were discovered. The Benders escaped. Various reports were circulated about their being captured and put to death, but these stories were never confirmed. There were also reports about some of the Benders being found alive in various parts of the country at different times but were found to be untrue. No one really knows what became of them.—KANSAS CITY *Times*, May 27, 1919.

JUDGING from letters some of you apparently missed the Camp-Fire statement that *Jimgrim* is drawn from real life—an American officer in the British service in Palestine but retaining his American citizenship. Some of you, too, "believe" that Talbot Mundy must have been in Palestine himself in order to have such accurate and such inside information, so I'll repeat that he spent most of a year there and with exceptional advantages for getting at the truth. If he could be prevailed upon to tell in print the story of his own adventures there it would make very good reading—and not lacking in the adventure element. Yes, he's been in India, too, though not so recently.

As to the series of stories now running, it is all fiction but, as Mr. Mundy puts it, he has "tried to interpret what is going on."

A LETTER from one of our Station Keepers to Mr. Cox. I saw the pictures and they made my fingers itch for a reel.

Miami, Florida.

In a recent number I saw a letter describing some wonderful fishing near the Hawaiian Islands. I am not going to attempt to tell you just what wonderful fishing one may enjoy in the waters adjacent to Miami, but under separate cover I am mailing to you today several Miami booklets showing photos of catches made here during the Winter season and also the diary of one enthusiast who fished from December to June.

THE writer is one of the best little "triers" you ever saw when it comes to fishing and nearly every week-end manages to slip down the bay in a 28-foot boat with a ten horse-power motor. An hour's run puts him off the best fishing-gound in the South. If it's a matter of fishing for small fish, all one has to do is bait up the line, drop it, pull up a fish and rebait and drop again. This is literally true and a party of six of us caught some six hundred pounds of fish on a single day's outing recently.

Sailfish are wonderful fighters and are usually found in the Gulf Stream; to hook one of these fellows means anywhere from thirty minutes' to an hours' strenuous fighting. These are caught by trolling. You have got to have some stout tackle, too, or else be prepared to lose your fish.

THERE is at present in port a schooner yacht, the *Anton Doorn*. She is owned by the Carnegie Foundation and is used in experimental work by a bunch of scientists who have headquarters on Dry Tortugas (the old pirate haven). Every Spring

these chaps all go down to Tortugas where they have living quarters and then work out of there in small boats, doing everything from trying to extract gold from sea-water to observing snails and their habits.

Just a few days since I was talking to the skipper of the *Anton Doorn* and he told me some interesting anecdotes. He has been with the boat for eighteen years and as a consequence is a pretty fair scientist himself.

He said the most humorous thing he knows of in all his piloting of the "professors" was that one of them was engaged in studying the habits of a certain kind of snail. The powers that be instructed him to build a snail village for them. Houses were built to accommodate the snails and the "prof." watched them all season and, on going away, had a fence built around the village. Back again next season and the tropical storms had blown away all the fence and the snails had gone traveling. Another season of work and study collecting snails enough for a village. This time the professor gave the skipper orders to have a fence made of cheese cloth put around the place. The skipper says he is wondering what the "prof." is going to say when he gets down next Spring and realizes that the cloth fence has rotted and gone, ditto the snails.

THE boat is splendidly equipped with all sorts of devices for deep-sea sounding and other scientific purposes. They carry over three miles of cable on board to be used in anchoring in deep water.

Hurricane season starts in these waters pretty soon and the "breeze" is pretty stiff at times, but no boats are blown out of the water. There'll be a couple of hundred boats from the North and East here for the Winter pretty soon and some of them are little old ordinary hundred-thousand-dollar tubs. Wish you could see the water-front here in Winter season. S'nuff. Good-by.—A. C. SMITH, Station 87.

WE'RE going to try out a new plan in the make-up of our magazine and I'm telling you about it in advance so that you'll be watching for it, understand the whys and wherefores and can give us in the office your opinions as to whether it is an improvement or not. We in the office think it is—naturally, or we wouldn't try it out, but, equally naturally, you readers are the ones to decide.

It isn't anything revolutionary or alarming. We're giving you about 125,000 words of fiction a month, besides the "Camp-Fire," "Ask Adventure" and the other departments. Always a serial, with the first instalment of a new one overlapping the last instalment of the old one. Always at least one complete novel or novelette, sometimes two or three. Always a bunch of short stories. We make 12,000 words the arbitrary line between a short story and a novelette. A novel is merely a longer novelette, sometimes running as high as 70,000 words. Our serial instalments average roughly 20,000 words or a bit more.

Well, the change is merely a question of dividing the same space a bit differently among short stories, novelettes or novels, and serials, and of being a whole lot more elastic in the amount of space allotted to any of these three classes in a given number.

"Laying out" an issue means merely choosing which items shall be used to fill that number of the magazine. But it isn't so simple as it sounds. You'd get tired and bored if I tried to tell you all the factors that have to be considered. Also I don't want to give you too many of the details we in the office have to consider, for that would cloud your judgment as readers only, and it's your judgment as readers only that we want. Having got that, it will be our job to make the editorial details fit in with it if they can be made to do so.

Suppose we consider the laying-out of an issue just as a puzzle. That's what it is, all right. Suppose we represent all the stories in our safe by narrow little strips of paper, the length of each in inches being determined by its length in words. Suppose one issue of our magazine can hold only one foot of these little strips laid end to end. We can let their total length run a fraction of an inch short of one foot and use the left-over space for several pages more of our departments or for our very short little articles filling a part of a page each or a whole page or even two pages, or can use an occasional poem. We can let the little strips total a bit more than a foot in length by cutting down a little on the space for departments, short articles and poems. But, roughly speaking, the strips must measure one foot total length.

SUPPOSE we use green strips for sea stories, red for Western stories, white for snow country stories, brown for South Sea stories, blue for South American stories, and so on—a different color for each geographical location. Mark all stories of the United States with a "U. S.," all stories of foreign lands "For.," all stories of U. S. possessions, of Canada, of American characters in foreign lands or at sea "½ For." Put an x on the slips representing those we consider our strongest stories; underscore the writer's name when it is

one that has proved a particular favorite with our readers in general. That's only a start at the factors that must be considered in laying-out, but it serves to indicate the general problem and we'll forget the others such as tragic, humorous, city, outdoors, Army, Navy, mining, etc., etc., etc. We must try to get a balance among all these factors in each issue—build up a rounded-out whole. And we must also build it with regard to the last few issues, the general plan of the issues immediately following and the total number of any kind or length of story in the safe.

So much for content, quality, etc. But the problem before us is one of length. The longer we make the serials, novelettes or novels, the less space for short stories and the fewer the number of titles or items. And so on. We've been running serials generally in instalments of from 18,000 to 22,000 words, as nearly of a size as possible. Of course you can't end an instalment just any place; even a very good serial can be largely spoiled by ending instalments at comparatively dull spots.

Now what we propose isn't any great change but still enough of one to have its effect on readers. This is the idea:

Have no fixed length for an instalment. Mark all the places that make good stopping-places. Use as much of a serial as fits the general conditions of any issue and the supply in the safe. The result will be that a serial of 90,000 might have instalments of 17,000, 30,000, 14,000 and 29,000. Even so those two short instalments are longer than many magazines use. The two long ones are far longer than are generally used. Our doubt is right there, however. Will the *comparative* shortness of a short instalment react unfavorably on readers?

It's like asking them to dinner, giving them just as good food as usual, but less of it. Without stopping to analyze, won't a good many of them just feel that John R. Smith, whose stories they used to like so much, has begun falling off of late?

Maybe that seems a small point, but it's just this kind of point that we in the office have to watch.

WE'RE trying out this change because, small as it may seem, it opens up quite a few opportunities. For example, suppose with a 21,000 word instalment, we want at least 7 or 8 short stories and in the safe have only 5 novelettes or novels that will fit in on that basis. Of these 5, one is by the author of the serial, one by an author in the last issue, two of them sea-stories while the serial is also a sea-story, and the other is a Western story while it happens that we're running a series of Western articles that cover too much the same ground. Something has to give; we are forced to do one of those things we don't want to do, and such little things as that do in the long run lessen the variety and interest of the book.

But suppose there were in our safe a novel 6,000 or 8,000 words longer than the 5 above but just the thing for that issue otherwise. The new plan would give us freedom to cut the serial instalment to around 14,000 and let us use that complete novel instead of one that fitted into that issue far less well. The remaining instalments of the serial would have to take up the 6,000 or 8,000 words from this one, but one of the above 5 novelettes could then be used so far as subject is concerned, as a place is made for the novelette of shorter length.

That is only one situation out of scores in which the new plan will help make our magazine better. I'm giving you only a sample instead of boring you with endless detail.

THERE'S another important phase. At present we have to reject complete novels if they run much over the maximum of 70,000 words, for not all of them are suitable to serialization. By the new plan we could get room for some of the best of them. Some good serials are not adapted to short instalments; by the new plan we could run them in a few long ones. And so on.

What the new plan means is more elasticity and therefore more opportunity. Like anything else, it could be overdone, but it needn't be overdone. We in the office just want to explain it in advance so that you'll have a comprehensive understanding of the problem and can give us your reactions and advice after the plan's been operating a few months. What we hope is that it will merely make the book a bit better without seeming to be any real change, but the years have taught us that the only test of any editorial theory is—the readers.

Except for the fact that the serial just finished ran in three very large instalments, the new plan can hardly get into full operation for a few issues yet.

CONCERNING his story in this issue a few words from Frank C. Robertson:

Hatch, Idaho.

The story is written with the idea at the bottom of it of a sheep dog rescuing a band of sheep as was suggested by the clipping which Dr. Mullikin of Newark sent in and which Mr. Hoffman sent to me.

Denny is exactly like a sheep dog I once owned myself, who, though he never pulled the stunts I have *Denny* do, yet was quite capable of it had the occasion arisen. Western sheep-dogs aren't quite capable of driving a mosquito down a gun-barrel as some of our Anzac brothers claim theirs can do, but they are a race that is hard to beat.—FRANK C. ROBERTSON.

A COMRADE asked at Camp-Fire whether any of you could tell us "the fate of a party who tunneled into a bank in Panama City, then ran to Bayano River or thereabout, it was reported, and with the loot made for the San Blas country." Here are two answers, with a word about our old friends the San Blas:

Cristobal, Canal Zone.

They hired a negro to take them down the West (Pacific) coast. When the boatman returned to Panama he was arrested for complicity, but finally acquitted on the grounds that he had only followed his occupation of boatman, no proof having been offered that he had any previous knowledge of the crime. The robbers landed, according to the negro's report, on the coast of Colombia, and made their way to the interior. Later reports were to the effect that they finally reached the city of Medellin, the capital of the Department of Antioquia, where they were arrested and held for extradition; this not being forthcoming, they were finally turned loose and disappeared from public view.

As for the amount of loot secured, the bank had been expecting a large shipment of money, which the robbers had been anticipating and when they saw several large, heavy boxes delivered to the bank, they naturally thought it was the shipment and broke in. Instead of the shipment of money, the boxes held only bank stationery. While the exact amount stolen was not given out, still it must have been large.

As for the robbers going through the San Blas country, the San Blas country, as it is referred to, lies on the East or Atlantic coast and they must have landed in Colombia or else a good way below the Bayano River, otherwise they would have had to pass through the "Chucunaque" country, which is a very dangerous if not impossible undertaking even to-day. While these Indians may not be head-hunters, still there are stories of them cutting the heads off of men, especially one man who held a high and responsible political office in the Department of Panama. This man's head was cut off and sent to his friends in Panama City, as a warning. While this may not be true, still no travelers tarry in that section of the country very long. This happened quite some years ago, but only in the past month there was a woman here who is walking around the world and is now on her way through South America and she was advised by one well informed authority that under no condition should she go through the "Chucunaque" country. This was printed in the daily paper.

Trusting that this may be of some information, and if it is printed, will be disappointed if I am not jumped on as a prevaricator.—WM. S. ELWELL.

P. S. If this is not correct, you might verify it by consulting Major FitzWilliams, who is in the States now if I am not mistaken.

Washington, D. C.

Mr. Perry Camp-Fires a request for information concerning the fate of the chaps who tunneled into a Panama bank a few years ago. I was in Panama City at the time and also have here a friend who at the time of the bank episode was a sergeant in the Canal Zone police, on duty at Ancon, and who participated in the chase. The whole story may be of interest.

ABOUT eight months before the break a party of four or five men opened an office a block away from the bank and announced themselves in the business of making concrete blocks for building purposes. They were wide open, to all appearances, and got business, as at that time much building was in progress in the suburbs of Panama City. Lots of dirt was used in their undertaking, of course, and many loads were hauled to and from their headquarters. To shorten the story, they tunneled from their place of business to the bank. This took, it is estimated, about eight months. The dirt taken out was used in making concrete blocks.

Investigation after the discovery of the job showed that they had used up-to-date electrical apparatus, the office and tunnel being wired for lights and bells which signalled to the workers in the tunnel when the door of the office was opened. Col. Goethals called it as neat an engineering job as he ever saw. They had planned to come up under the vault in the bank and to go through the steel floor of the vault on Thursday night preceding Good Friday, this being a holiday, as was also the following Saturday, with an intervening Sunday before the bank would open for business again. Being sure of timing their entry into the vault correctly, they delayed making arrangements for their getaway, and this was to embarass them, as you'll see. The weak spot in the scheme was this—the vault had no steel bottom. While working the last night it is supposed the dirt floor caved in and left them but a short time to grab what they could and get away. What they did get out with was not made public. At any rate the robbery was discovered in the morning and boats put out to scour the coast in the immediate vicinity of Panama, but without result. Some time later a Panamanian boatman turned up who told of having been hired by the contractors (?) to take them down the Colombian coast and land them. It was reported at Ancon that the Colombian authorities,

captured them at Barranquilla, took the money, and turned the men loose. It is also said that one of the gang was later captured in the United States, though there is nothing definite about this.—W. T. GREENE.

REMEMBER years ago we were interested in the old whaler *Morning Star?* The last we heard of her was from Geo. A. Gale about the end of 1918 when he was quartermaster in U. S. A. T. He had sailed with Captain Arey, an old-timer skipper who sailed in her years ago, When he knew her she lay at an old storage dock in Providence, R. I., and was to be used in a motion picture. In the Summer of 1917 he saw her in Brooklyn, schooner rigged. His letter to us brought forth further word concerning her long history:

Boulder Junction, Wisconsin.

Notice clipping: Would it interest you to know my great uncle was captain of the *Morning Star* in 1800? Have some clearance papers made out as far back as 1795. I have a wonderfully well written letter from the British Company who chartered the ship in 1808 to the captain, Parley R. Cady, my great uncle.

Will you kindly let me know if you would be interested in seeing them?—MRS. PAUL ARMUND.

AS TO coons and his story in this issue here is something from Clyde B. Hough:

To begin at the beginning, there are only two species of coon in the world. They both inhabit North America. One, the black footed coon, *P. Hernandezii*, ranges west of the Mississippi only, particularly Texas and California. This is not the gentleman whom you meet in the story. Consequently we will dismiss him, the black footed fellow, without further consideration.

The hero of "One of Life's Guardian's" belongs to the eastern species of the coon family, *Procyon Lotor*. The description here is correct. I have never known a coon to rid himself of fleas as described in the opening of the story. I was at particular pains to state this fact in the story. I used this stunt to establish my coon hero as superior to the average coon in intelligence. That, I believe, is author's privilege.

COONS do raid hen-houses on occasion. I have known them to do it. However, they do not live by this method alone. And both the hawk and the owl are more dreaded by the Southern fowl owner than is the coon.

The fox is more widely press-agented for his cunning than is the coon. But I doubt if Reddy could match wits to any advantage with the average coon.

I have never actually known a coon to fight solely for the protection of his family. But then how is one to know what the little devil is fighting for? Perhaps it's just the law of self-preservation. But I'm inclined to believe that the average coon likes to fight, to fight dogs especially. At any rate it is author's privilege to attribute heroic qualities to his hero. And I assure you that if any coon ever took it into his head to fight for his family, he is fully capable of displaying all the prowess, wisdom and sagacity that I attributed to my hero.

Coons do pick the largest trees to live in, that is, the largest trees that afford hollows qualified for use as dens. More than that, if your dogs are trailing a coon and he decides that the time has come to leave the ground, he will choose the largest tree in that vicinity and he will climb to the very top of said tree. I know. I've hunted coons.

Some coons will open their eyes in the night and stare at a light, but others will not. I think that depends on individual intelligence. I have seen it work both ways.

AS FOR the fighting prowess of the coon in general, he's a whirlwind, a terror, a living bundle of fury. Wild cats, lynx, bobcats and even mountain lions can not do more damage among a pack of dogs. Man, you can't imagine it, unless you've seen it. I've seen one coon whip three dogs in the water. They always lure the dogs to the water if that's possible, It's not only that they can stay under longer than the dogs, but they're more active in the water. Down in lower Anson County, North Carolina, where I was born and partly raised, we used to keep one or two bench-legged fistes for tree dogs but we never turned these loose on the coon when the tree had been fallen. We generally had a pack of mongrel hounds or husky, common curs to do the fighting. And believe me it was some fighting. It sure tries a dog's courage. I've seen them quit and crawl out of the mêlée like whipped kids. I have also seen dogs stick and fight when their ears were slashed to ribbons and their noses as raw as hamburger.

The coon possesses to an intense degree that faculty which belongs to felines, of shrinking just beyond the reach of slashing fangs. He does it, too, at the very last fraction of the very last second. He does it so quickly that the action is invisible. You can see that this would be greatly discouraging to the attacking dog. But, man, it's some sport—one little, red-hot devil holding his own or better against four or five big brutes that are often double his size! Excuse me, I didn't mean to write a book, but talking about coon-hunting sort of roused old memories and—oh ——, I'd like to go coon-hunting to-night!—HOUGH.

ANOTHER queer place to find a copy of our magazine. I think the word is "strainer," but I don't know oil engines.

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.

Since taking out my Identification Card in November, 1920, I have seen a little more of the world. Spain, Portugal, England, Ireland, France, Belgium, Holland, etc. as wiper, oiler, water tender, fireman (oil) and junior engineer and have now settled down as district manager of one of Uncle John's Companies. Had a few little parties with Dame Chance in last two years but am still living.

The latest place to find a copy of our magazine was in a strainer of the oil circulating system of a

turbine boat I was on in 1920. Evidently hidden there by some one reading on watch and put in use without being noticed.

Picked up one of the old Tropical Tramps on the beach at Lisbon and stowed him away and unloaded him at Oporto. When he had left, discovered he had broached my case of private stock.

Am figuring on shanty-boating down the Ohio River this Fall.—No. 12,243.

UNLESS I'm mistaken, the general testimony of Camp-Fire as to hoop-snakes was to the effect that after all "there ain't no such animile." Anyhow, Mr. H. K. Stokes, of Mohawk, Florida, is a non-believer and got for us some very damning testimony from the Smithsonian Institution. Also on the deadliness of the pilot-snake as described by one comrade. This was in 1921, Mr. Stokes' letter having only now emerged from our cache.

Smithsonian Institution
United States National Museum
Washington, D. C.

DEAR SIR: Replying to your inquiry of April 16, Dr. Leonhard Stejneger, Head Curator of Biology, makes the following statement: "There is no such snake as 'hoop-snake.' The mountain black-snake is often called a pilot-snake, but the description given does not apply. It is not poisonous. The alleged treatment with soda is worthless."

The paper by Dr. Stejneger entitled "The Poisonous Snakes of North America" has for some time been out of print but copies of the National Museum's Annual Report for 1893 in which it is printed, may still be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, this city, for $1.15.—W. de C. RAVENEL,
Administrative Assistant to the Secretary.

THERE came to us two stories by Bill Adams, "The Lure" and "Aftermath." We wanted them both, but when it came to closing the deal with the agent handling them we found that "The Lure" had already been sold to an English magazine and would be published before any American magazine could print it. One of you had already called our attention to the fact that an earlier story by Bill Adams had appeared in an English magazine before it did in ours, though we had not known of this. In both cases the trouble was due to a mix-up between American and English literary agents. An American story is supposed to be printed in this country first, in England afterward or possibly at the same time. The particular agent concerned will henceforth see to it that English magazines don't get first printing of American stories.

Our magazine does not like to publish stories that have appeared earlier in England. On the other hand, we did not like to lose two stories by Bill Adams, who, according to our careful record of your comments in letters, has become one of your prime favorites. ("Aftermath" while not scheduled for English publication and while a complete story in itself, gains in effectiveness if preceded by "The Lure," as some of the same characters figure in both.)

We decided to take both stories and state the case to you frankly. The circulation of English magazines in this country is comparatively small and the very few of you who've chanced to see "The Lure" before it reaches you in *Adventure* will, I think, be willing to put up with that rather than deprive all the rest of you of a chance to read the story.

BECAUSE I can't cover it briefly and grudge the space to it, the following, contrary to our usual custom, goes into small type, but that doesn't mean I have any desire to make it seem as if some one else were responsible for it.

So many of you have written in assuring me that our magazine needs no defense against charges of propaganda of any kind other than Americanism and other causes frankly and directly advocated, that I was tempted to print one or two of these letters and call an end.

The charges of propaganda are baseless. But there are things back of these charges that need attention.

First, as to those who lately have charged the magazine with pro-British propaganda. They do not seem particularly reachable by reason, but perhaps the following will reach them.

LISTEN, you. If you're so keen on combatting pro-British propaganda, be of some real use. There's a campaign on foot to doctor history textbooks in American schools, by modifications or substitutions, to belittle the importance of the American Revolution and make England, from first to last, far more of a friend to this country than present and past school texts have made her. The object, of course, is to build up in coming generations of Americans a more friendly feeling for England, probably looking to an alliance. Even you can see that this campaign could do a thousand times more for British propaganda than this or any other magazine could do if it tried. Work where your work is most needed. Even if you can't see truly enough to realize our magazine isn't propagandizing, even if you must still nag at it, even if my telling you this still leaves me a pro-English propagandist in your eyes, get on this other job. You and every good American are needed on it.

It's all right to promote friendlier relations with England and with all other countries. So far as the *facts* warrant changes in our school histories, by all means let them be made. But any one who colors those facts to even the faintest degree in the interests of any nation, is an enemy or traitor to America. He is making a sneaking and most serious attack,

not merely upon freedom of expression of opinion, but upon freedom of opinion itself. And freedom of opinion is the very foundation-stone of our democracy and of our liberties.

Listen again. If in combatting that campaign you even try to color our school histories in the opposite direction, *you* become just as much a traitor to America as are those you combat. Only one thing has rightful place in our school histories and that one thing is facts, facts uncolored either in favor of any other nation or against any other nation.

RUMORS of this pro-British campaign seemed almost too outrageous and un-American for belief. But by now there is warrant for every real American to set himself actively on guard against it. And against any anti-British propaganda in our school texts.

This country is so full of propaganda and counter-propaganda that I'm taking pains to state a Catholic organ (the K. of C. *Columbia* for September, 1922) is strong in making this pro-English text-book charge. I do not attribute it to un-American motives but sooner or later some propaganda hound will charge me with having brought up the matter because I'm a Catholic. As it happens, I'm not, and a Protestant first brought it to my attention.

Examine the public libraries also. Such a campaign can operate outside of school texts. For example, several years ago my boy brought home a book about Daniel Boone from the public library of Richmond Hill, Long Island, which is within the New York City limits. The author had calmly made it the French instead of the English who sent the Indians against the Kentucky settlers and who were at the time our country's foes even without declaration of war. That kind of thing isn't done by mistake. Books in which the facts of history are colored or distorted for any other nation's benefit have no place in our public libraries. Their authors and publishers and the library authorities who are responsible for their admission to shelf-room need to be questioned and called to account.

NOW for the more general question. Whenever an American speaks up against pro-British propaganda for the *sole reason that he is pro-American* I am fully with him. When he speaks against pro-British propaganda because he is pro-Irish, pro-French, pro-Bolshevist or pro any other foreign cause, or merely because he is anti-British, he himself is a propagandist and I'm against him as well as against pro-British propaganda. Being anti-British is just as un-American as being pro-British. It is just as anti-American to be pro-French or pro-Irish as to be pro-British.

Every American, to be sure, has entire right to prefer any foreign nation he pleases above all other foreign nations and to voice his opinion. But if he goes so far as to let himself think, to even the slightest degree, of that nation's interests ahead of America's interests, he is anti-American. So long as you consider *only* America's interest, talk for or against any nation you please.

Charging this magazine with doing un-American propaganda seems rather childish. Its twelve years of printed pages speak for themselves. If the accusers would consider those twelve years of pages as a whole, instead of seizing upon some small detail that, taken by itself, their ingenuity can twist into propaganda, there would be no such charges. But a man who can see a fly on a barn-door without seeing the door is not to be reasoned with. He is fly-size and that's all there is to it.

THE funny part of it is that they attack it for exactly opposite reasons. The other day I laughed out loud over a collected bunch of letters to or about Talbot Mundy. One letter scolded him for being pro-British. Next letter scolded him for being anti-British. Next letter pro. Next letter anti. And so on.

Maybe it would be a good plan, when any one accuses us of, say, pro-English propaganda, for me to send his letter to some one who accuses us of anti-English propaganda and send the other fellow's letter to him. Then the two can fight it out to their heart's content and Camp-Fire won't have to listen to either of them. I suppose each of them would say the other is merely a dummy hired by the magazine, but anyhow each of them would have an "enemy" to argue with. Though they won't have a chance to get any of their own propaganda into print.

THE serious side of the matter in general is that this country, especially since other countries introduced the acute habit from 1914 on, is so full of all kinds of propaganda that most people are sore and suspicious and ready at the drop of a hat, even an imaginary hat, to start doing some propaganda of their own. And a lot of Americans are getting pretty sick of it all—are beginning to look for the Africans in the wood-pile. Pro-English propaganda traces easily to the English themselves and to the Anglo-maniacs among ourselves. Anti-English propaganda is not so easy to trace back to its real source. Anglophobe Americans, the Irish, French, Germans, Bolshevists, and Mohammedans and other non-white or non-Christian nations, are all under suspicion. But when we go on and examine the pro and anti propaganda on other nations I think we'll find certain influences at work that have their fingers in nearly every pie and are aiming at something more than any single foreign nation.

AS TO propaganda in Camp-Fire or in our stories if you're going to look for it you'll surely find it. We print what seems likely to interest our readers, avoiding as best we can anything likely to give offense, do harm or further any cause other than those openly espoused. In so doing we sometimes print things that reflect creditably or discreditably on various nations and various other things, though not because of this reflection. If it is propaganda to do this, then our magazine is a propagandist. But if the propaganda-hounds will judge it as a whole instead of by some detached instance, they will find it difficult to decide whether to label the magazine pro or anti. Most of you understand, and I know I'd only get and merit your contempt if I let propaganda charges deflect our magazine from doing just what it's always done.—A. S. H.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader

In the last issue of each month are printed in full the friendly services of *Adventure* to readers: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons; Camp-Fire Stations, etc.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules**, thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 24 T Wharf, Boston, Mass., can supply Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: All issues, complete, from Nov., 1910, Vol. 1, No. 1 to Aug., 30th, 1922. Over two hundred copies Forty dollars.—Address LEONARD W. BARKLEY, Morrisburg, Ontario, Canada.

WILL SELL: Jan. 20th, and 30th, all Feb., May 10th, June 10th, and 30th, all July and Aug., Sept. 10th, 1922. Ten cents each, plus postage.—Address B. THOMPSON, P. O. Box 109, Del Rio, Texas.

WILL SELL: All issues 1912 to Dec. 30th, 1921. In good condition. No single copies. What offers?—Address J. LYON, 506 Kiowa St., Leavenworth, Kansas.

WILL SELL: Mid-Nov., 1920; 1st Apl., Mid-May, 1st July, Nov. 30th, and all Dec., 1921; all 1922 up to, and including May 30th. Best offer—Address MRS. FRANK ADAMS, No. Weymouth, Mass.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators; use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month. Address letters regarding stations to J. Cox.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails in Feb. 28th issue*)

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of the last issue of each month.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

1, 2. The Sea. In Two Parts
3, 4. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
5, 6. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
7. Australia and Tasmania
8. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
9. New Guinea
10. Philippine Islands
11. Hawaiian Islands and China
12. Japan
13. Asia, Southern
14—20. Africa. In Seven Parts
21. Turkey and Asia Minor
22, 23. Balkans. In Two Parts
24. Scandinavia
25. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
26, 27. South America. In Two Parts
28. Central America
29, 30. Mexico. In Two Parts
31—37. Canada. In Seven Parts
38. Alaska
39. Baffinland and Greenland
40—44. Western U. S. In Five Parts
45—48. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
49—52. Eastern U. S. In Four Parts
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Fishing in North America
Mountains and Mountaineering
Standing Information
Lost Trails

Clipper Ships' Record Passages

ANYBODY got any further information to contribute?

Question:—"Seeing your name in *Adventure* as an expert on ships and shipping, I venture to write you soliciting information on the following, all of which doubtless you can answer. Permit me to say here, I have some knowledge of sea and ships, having commanded many and varied and in many waters, but unfortunately have not a great fund of information that may be termed reliable. Hence my solicitation.

I may say here that I spoke publicly often during war-time on ships variously and raked in some

shekels for pipes and tobacco for the boys afloat. I am one of the old-time barnacles, always in sail, and got my first baptizing in salt water in 1860, and have had as many vicissitudes as most.

Well, now, sir, I am asking you to solve the following problems:

1. Will you tell me the fastest sailing-ship passage from New York to San Francisco, ship, tonnage, mate and captain, also fastest return passage?

2. Fastest passage and voyage from U. S. eastern seaboard to China, Foo-Choo or Shanghai, back to U. S. A.

3. Fastest passage from China to London, England, by a U. S. ship, time, date and name.

4. Was there ever a challenge race between a British and a U. S. ship from China or anywhere in the East Indies to London? If so, date and names.

5. What was the fastest passage from London to Australia, and *vice versa*, British or U. S. A.?

6. What is the greatest mileage ever run in a given time by any ship?

7. What was the fastest U. S. ship ever *sailed*, other than short passage?

8. What was the fastest British ship ever sailed?

9. What was fastest ship ever sailed, any nation?

Did you know of any ship carrying anything above a moonsail? I do not know how I may remunerate for return postage, but perhaps I may be able to answer some questions you may desire."—Capt. G. L. Saxby, Jubilee Dock, Darling St., Balmain, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—I am able to answer but a few of the questions you ask me, as I am where I do not have access to any large public library and many of my own books are scattered and gone. These answers, however, are to the best of my knowledge correct.

The best passage between San Francisco and New York was made by the clipper ship *Comet* in 1853. She was commanded, I believe, by Lieut. M. F. Maury of the Navy, on leave of absence—as were many Navy officers at the time—and temporarily in the merchant service. This time was 83 days, according to the report of Maury to the Navy Department. Don't know her tonnage.

The fastest time between Melbourne and Liverpool was made by the American-built clipper ship *Lightning*, built by Lauchlin McKay. Time 63 days. She was British-owned at the time.

I have no data for fast round trips, but here are some records made in the China trade by the old American clipper ships:

The *Natchez* made the run from Canton River to New York in 76 days; the *Ino* made the run from Singapore to New York in 86 days. Don't know tonnage or skippers.

I do not think there ever was a challenge race between English vessels and American clippers in China trade. It would have been too one-sided. The skippers of those old clipper ships not only had the fastest sailing-craft ever launched under them, but to a man they were drivers. They were all like one of the old breed I sailed under some forty odd years ago. He never shortened sail under any conditions of wind or weather. His standing remark was:

"I have good sticks and good rigging. The canvas will go first."

That was the only way his canvas ever was reduced while I was with him, acquiring great proficiency with palm and needle, putting patch on patch on the light canvas.

The greatest mileage ever run in any one day to my knowledge was by the *Flying Cloud*, on a run from New York to San Francisco, when she logged 374 miles in one day and made the run in 90 days.

The *Sovereign of the Seas*, 2,400 tons, commanded by Capt. McKay, brother of the builder of this and countless other clipper ships, made the run from Honolulu to New York in 82 days, and in 22 days of that time logged 5,301 nautical miles. Her best day's run was 362 miles. That same ship made the run from New York to San Francisco under these conditions:

She was dismasted off the west coast of South America, losing everything on the fore and main above her lower masts. She spent 14 days getting up a jury rig and completed her passage to San Francisco under that jury rig, making the entire passage from port to port, notwithstanding this handicap, in 102 days.

The fastest passage across the Atlantic was made by the *Dreadnaught*,* Capt. Samuels, 9 days and 17 hours, beating the best time then made by the steamers. While the matter is in dispute, the probability is that the *Dreadnaught* was the fastest American ship, on the record of the extraordinary passages she made across the Atlantic, when, on two separate occasions, she brought into New York the latest European news, beating the steamships with it.

Forty years ago I heard old shellbacks yarning about ships which carried canvas above a moonsail, but never the name of any such ship. Personally I doubt it. In fact skysails were practically the highest canvas carried on the old clipper ships. It was the canvas they carried in heavy weather, not their kites, which was responsible for their quick passages.

In the Sydney public library you will probably be able to find "Ships of the Past" by Robert Bennett Forbes, and Chatterton's "Ships and Ways of Other Days," which may contain the data I am unable to give you.

*See poem on page 191.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Doing Alaska the Way Tourists DON'T

THE secret is to hold your outfit down as light as possible:

Question:—"My chum and I this year intend to take a good long holiday in Alaska.

We shall not be tied down to time and want to Summer and Winter there (about 10-12 month trip.)

We should be glad if you can give us any hints and advice as to clothing, equipment, etc.

We do not mind any reasonable expense so long as we can see Alaska from the inside, as you might say, going from place to place."—F. A. Collin, Crofton Park, Eng.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—I think I "get you," as we say on this side of the pond. You want to knock about the country in the way tourists *do not*. Well, here's the "dope," if you will pardon some more slang.

Don't take anything more than your very intimate personal outfit. While you might save a little money in first cost by shipping an outfit up, you would lose much in the end because the stuff wouldn't be right—in amount or kind—and it would not be just where you wanted it. Lugging heavy things about in Alaska is the one thing you MUST avoid, or you get nowhere.

Take money in the form of negotiable paper and rely on the many posts and stores at all the towns and stations for outfit.

As to personal impedimenta, take ordinary clothes, except that you want to specialize in heavy woolen socks. Footwear will best be bought there; except that, if you have a couple of pair of outing shoes you think highly of, for Summer use, take them.

Moderately heavy, best-quality woolen underwear is also desirable, and any sort of close-woven cotton (or wool) outer clothing. Nothing beats duck or khaki, with reliance on underwear and undervests of "sweater" materials to gain the warmth you need under the duck or khaki. Heavy wool outer clothing is a mistake, usually. Unless the air is very still in Winter, the wind goes through. Also snow sticks and penetrates.

A fur cap you can take, if you happen to have one, or get it there. Let your whole outfit come within the 150 pounds allowed as baggage on the steamers.

You may not think it, but really I have now given it all to you, so far as preparation is concerned. I've been doing this for years. I spent ten years in Alaska before I began advising people—mostly spent in the north and northwestern part too.

You know you go to Seattle to ship up to Alaska.

Automatic *vs.* Revolvers

HERE'S a correspondent who calls our "A. A." firearms expert's preference into question. But, as "Ol' Man Wiggins" points out in his rejoinder, his choice isn't based on blind prejudice; he has his reasons:

Mattoon, Ill.

I have read with much interest and some amusement the many articles which have appeared in Camp-Fire from time to time about revolvers and automatic pistols. To begin with, what is an "automatic revolver"? The articles by Mr. Wiggins have especially interested me; but why does he discredit the automatic? To my notion the Colt's automatic pistol, caliber .45, is the best hand firearm ever manufactured.

I write from experience. I have shot thousands of shells from practically all kinds of firearms and have yet to see one which will compare favorably with the .45 auto.

Mr. Wiggins is partial to the Colt's single-action revolver. He says that they are the most dependable. I have owned several single-action Colt's revolvers. In common every-day target-shooting I have broken practically all of the small moving parts. Not from abuse; just use. Ex.: Hammer, trigger, trigger-spring, main spring, cylinder-lock, hand-spring.

The old single action was all right for what it was made for—an occasional shot. I nearly got shot twice by parts breaking.

I carried two .45 auto. pistols for four years. I never had the least trouble with them. And they got use. Were shot thousands of times. At fifty yards they are as accurate as any target pistol or revolver I have ever seen.

That is all the bunk about lightning-quick draws in the old days out West. The gun in general use was the old Peacemaker. At first it had a seven-and-one-half-inch barrel. Then it was shortened to five and one-half; finally to four and three-quarters of an inch.

Any one who knows the heavy old clumsy six-shooter knows that it can not be drawn from a holster with the lightning speed that story writers tell us. When the old-timers finally did unlimber the six-shooter they were not such expert shots, as most of the shooting was done at close range across a saloon or corral.

Please explain how *Don Everhard* can shoot a Colt's .45 automatic in his left hand.

For speed give me a Colt's .45 automatic loaded with a shell in the chamber, hammer cocked and safety "on," carried in a spring holster under the left arm.

When a person draws a single action or a double action, the gun sits high in the hand and points in a different direction from the way the trigger finger would point if it were not on the trigger. Not so the .45 auto. Point your forefinger quickly at some object. Doesn't it line up automatically? Just so the .45 auto.—LELAND REESE.

To this letter Brother Wiggins makes the following response:

I'll gladly give my reasons for "panning" the automatic pistol as a weapon of self-defense.

First, last, and between times I have found the automatic pistol, with one exception, prone to jam. I have used new Lugers, from which I had just removed the grease placed on them "over the Rhine," and they jammed merrily. I have used the Service pistol, the .45 automatic Colt, under the same conditions, and with the same result. I will admit that the smaller pocket automatics of all makes seemed to be less apt to misbehave than the big military weapon. These pistols were in perfect condition, I may add.

My experiences are not the only ones; I have had in many letters from men who both had been in service, and from those still in service, saying my contentions on the self-loading pistol were correct according to their experiences also. Of course a soldier isn't exactly encouraged to criticize his weapons in public, but in private he will generally tell his honest convictions, and the automatic pistol gets the worst recommendation from the ex-soldier that I ever heard about any one weapon.

Just on the past Labor Day two officers died in the adjoining county to me, one of whom was killed after his comrade's automatic had jammed and the killer got a Winchester rifle into action. Had the despised old Colt S. A. been used, the matter would have been reversed. I do not know the make or caliber of the automatic that so misbehaved.

A friend of the writer was called into a house to take a man out last Winter, and the party opened on him with an automatic; it jammed at the third shot, and the officer was not killed, as I feel sure he would have been had the criminal used a revolver.

The British Government found the automatic wanting, I am told. I understand an unofficial inquiry is now in progress among the officers of a certain military organization to see just what can be done with a view to selecting some other side arm.

While I will confess that I consider the .45 Colt automatic pistol the best big-caliber automatic pistol in existence, yet my firm belief is that as regards certainty of operation it does not equal a revolver of good make.

In regard to the parts of the old Colt breaking at target practise: I have succeeded in breaking two trigger-springs in the years, about ten, that I have been frisking about with the old hogleg. I have broken three firing-pins in the modern military-type revolvers—one in 1906 and two in the last two years, one of them a locally made one. Of course I have no means of knowing how much shooting Mr. R. does, however.

Now as regards that "lining-up" matter: I find that any arm I pick up and throw down on a mark seems to line up all right for me. But for a snap shot I prefer the old Colt to any weapon I ever used. About the best I seem able to do is to throw a "Prince Albert" tobacco-can into the air and then draw and hit it with my old Colt. Very slow, I'll admit, as compared with what some writers in the Wild and Woozy East have told about the bad men of the old days.

Of course Wild Bill's stunts of hitting a can in the air twice with bullets from his right-hand revolver and once with his left in a single flight of the can, has been duplicated by Hardy, but he didn't use an automatic if I recall correctly. I seem to recall that he used a .38 special.

Furthermore, the ejected shell of the automatic pistol will sometimes fall back into the ejector port and jam the automatic .45 very effectually. And while you are remedying that what's the other fellow going to be doing? Picking posies?

Also, ask some fellow who was with Colonel Dodd in his Mexican expedition what they found about automatics being disabled by dust and grit. Ever see the old Colt, or any modern good revolver, so disabled by dust that it wouldn't operate?

As to how *Everhard* shoots with either hand, that's for Mr. Young to explain. I can't hit much with either hand any more.

It might be interesting to learn from some reader in Texas what the Rangers use as a side arm. They certainly will be apt to consider utility instead of sentiment in regard to their guns.

Let no one think I am prejudiced against any make of weapon; I have five Colts in my possession at the present time, and five Smith & Wessons, all revolvers. I sold my .45 Colt automatic, a new weapon, because it jammed for me when target-shooting.

I will not, through the Camp-Fire or elsewhere, recommend to my correspondents for their use anything that I have found wanting in the essential points of reliability. And in this class I have found all automatic pistols save one. They are all right for target-shooting, and I'll gladly admit their accuracy, but for the rough use of the field, where the use of a side arm may spell the difference 'twixt life and death, give me the old revolver in every case. It always works, in my experience, and I've seen them under fearful conditions too. I'm willing to go to the mat on the revolver *vs.* automatic question any time.

It's foggy, and cold, and I'm having a telescope sight put on my rifle for crow and indoor target work this Winter.

And by the way—

Know All Men by These Presents That:

Ol' Man Wiggins is gittin' ready to go huntin'.* Out where the deers is thicker'n a sugar-barr'l with flies, and where the b'ars is so affectionate that they does a Grizzly Bear on every chance acquaintance. There's so much timber that Paul Bunyan had to take the Big Blue Ox and snake it off so's the salmon could dig a river to swim up; and it stands on end so's there's two counties in the space of one, 'cause they log and farm both sides of it.

The ground-hawgs is ferocious, the cougars is r'arin' t' go, and the salmonfish jest rises out uh the rivers to grab a hook without even a angle-worm on it.

And in conclusion I will add that the Leather Medal, signifying the Championship of Chihuahua, suitably engraved, awaits my return.

That's why the letters may be a bit late this month. Ever thine, Ol' Man Wiggins.

*To forestall any possibility of Ol' Man Wiggins being suspected of hunting out of season I'd better remark that this letter was written on October 10, 1922.

Game of the Philippines

ALSO an explanation of how the wily native fishes with a fan:

Question:—"Could a fellow live off the country if he does not mind hard work?

What kind of game is there both large and small? Also fishing?

I mean the Philippine Islands."—R. Ireland, Mantua, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Connor:—Yes, I can agree with you that a man can survive anywhere, almost, if he doesn't mind hard work. But if you are figuring upon competing with the native laborer you will meet disappointment. It cannot be done. Living conditions are so vastly different.

There are some wild boar, and a small species of deer—somewhat like the Virginia deer. Many fowl that are eatable.

Fishing happens to be a native industry, and is followed by thousands of the natives as a livelihood. Fish merchants have their representatives traveling all through the various islands purchasing the dried product—the most popular among the natives.

The cost—from observation—would be about the same as to our own native fishermen. A boat—natives use dugout canoe—nets and the building of rattan fish-weirs. This is a large fan-like construction of split bamboo set far out into the ocean at low tide with the edges of the half-circle built in close to the beach. A gate or trap is built in the exact center of this fan, and at high tide the fish pass through and around the edges of the fan. A native paddles out and drops a split-bamboo gate into a slot provided for it, and as the water drops—the tide going out—

the fish are caught. A net, and they are gathered in for the market—both local and national.

Have I answered you to your satisfaction? If not, I shall be only too glad to give any further advice that I can. I thank you.

Climate of Wyoming

WELL, what would you expect a Wyoming man to say?

Question:—"I am writing you for information regarding sheep-raising in the West.

My mother and father, my wife and myself are coming West next Summer by auto, camping all the way. We plan to look the country over with the idea of settling and going into sheep-raising.

1. How would Utah be for this, and what is the climate?

2. What State would you advise for this purpose?

3. Would it be possible for two men with small capital, say $2,000, and able to raise possibly as much more, to handle sheep enough to pay?

4. Please give me general information on this subject—best breeds for that country, methods of handling, price of wool and lamb on the hoof, etc.

5. What is the price of saddle and pack horses out there?

Any advice you can give me on this subject will be greatly appreciated."—MAJOR R. RIX, Gorham, N. H.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton:—As you mention Utah and its climate I am not sure that your communication shouldn't have been addressed to E. E. Harriman, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Cal. But as you speak of the West in general I am going to tell you what I can of Wyoming: You see I only cover the States of Colorado and Wyoming.

1. The climate of Wyoming is ideal. The atmospheric conditions, caused by the high altitude and the geographic location, produce an overabundance of fresh air; and in the Summer, while the days are warm, they are not hot and sultry; at night one can always sleep under a pair, or more, of blankets and get up in the morning feeling refreshed and ready for the day's work.

This State has for a long time been one of the foremost in the group of wool-producing States, and recently has been the first in quantity and value of wool produced.

2. Would not like to advise any particular State. Write Mr. Harriman, also Mr. Chester C. Davis, Helena, Mont., who covers Montana for *Adventure*, then use your own judgment after making the trip you have in view.

3. The capital you speak of is rather small, especially so if you would be expecting returns the first year. However, that amount expended in breeding-ewes would after the first year return profits, and after the second year one could really say he was on his feet and going. Nearly all the sheep in this State are run on free range or leased land, and in some parts very little Winter feeding is necessary. You would probably have to spend some of your capital for buildings and corrals.

If it were I, I believe I'd figure on taking a homestead and gradually branching out into the sheep business as I went along, and there are thousands of acres of homestead land open to entry in this State. I wish you would write to Mr. Roy Lockenour, Box 23, Glenrock, Wyo., stating the amount of your capital, and ask his advice. You see, that part of the country is being rapidly developed, and I am rather out of touch with present conditions there; but I do know it to be a wonderful country with a lot of opportunities still left.

5. Saddle and pack horses vary in price—from $25 for an ordinary pack-animal to $60 for a good saddle-horse.

I am sure the trip you have planned will be delightful, and I wish you success. Better take the Lincoln Highway to Cheyenne; then from there the National Park Highway will take you into and through the sheep country of Wyoming and into Montana by the way of the Yellowstone Park, if you should desire to take that in on your way.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Satsuma and Cloisonné

CERAMICS is a form of art that has been patronized by wealthy men of all ages and lands, from the feudal princes of medieval Japan to the late J. P. Morgan. But occasionally the potter got rich enough to patronize another art in his turn. Wasn't it the Wedgwood firm which placed Coleridge out of the reach of poverty?

Question:—"Thought I would write you relative to Satsuma and *cloisonné*. As you doubtless know, every dealer claims his goods are genuine, which is not always true. I once bought a gold (?) ring of the conventional dragon design and wore it overnight. My finger was black and swollen next morning.

"I was told by one who claimed to know that the 'cobwebs' and bell-like tone are signs of genuine Satsuma, but was later informed differently. I brought two rather expensive vases home but was told they were cheap imitations. If you can, would you please tell me how to distinguish between the genuine and fake Satsuma; also how to tell genuine *cloisonné*?"—O. B. GERMOND, Peell, Wash.

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—I trust you will pardon the delay in reply to your favor—due to absence on a vacation.

In that letter of yours you set me a task which I will frankly say I can not do; that is to say, in a letter I can not teach you how to distinguish between imitation and genuine Satsuma. Only an expert, trained by years of study and handling of old and genuine porcelain, can make such distinction. The necessary knowledge is a natural *sense* for such things as much as it is tangible knowledge that can be imparted to another. On the question of *cloisonné*—all *cloisonné* is genuine, as I will explain after a few more words for Satsuma.

Your informant with reference to "cobwebs" and "tone" of Satsuma was right to a certain extent; all china or porcelain of fine texture will ring clear, and in case of varieties of glaze that "cobweb" or crackle, the finer the texture the finer will be the crackle. In all probability, however, there is not on the market today a piece of genuine old Satsuma of art value, nor has there been for years.

Furthermore, we need not expect any unless some collection of porcelain "gems" is by chance and changing fortune put up for sale. In which case probably neither you nor I could scare up the money that would be necessary to purchase even a small specimen.

So-called Satsuma, manufactured some in Tokyo and some in Kyoto, is now made and decorated after the style of that which in former centuries and years was fashioned under the patronage of the feudal Princes of Satsuma Province. In a sense then, you will see, the modern product is Satsuma, but it has no particular *art value*.

Pieces of genuine old Satsuma are usually small, ranging in color from cream to old-ivory. The very oldest pieces are reddish in tint. The porcelain is of a hard texture. The glaze has very fine crackles. The decoration is raised and is of great delicacy of tracery and coloring. The modern product follows these characteristics as closely as possible, and the fineness of decoration practically sets the market value.

Cloisonné takes its name from the *method* of work, rather than from materials used. That is, in *cloisonné* enameling small cells, or *cloisons*, are built up on a surface by ribbons of metal soldered edgewise and marking out the design. These *cloisons* are filled in by layers of colored enamels. So in *cloisonné* you can readily see the metal outline of the design. Some work may be coarse and some fine.

I can't remember ever to have seen any imitation of this work. Such imitation would necessarily be fine painting and would be more difficult than to fashion a coarse design after the real method. It follows—the more delicate the design, the softer the coloring, the finer the enamel texture, the greater is the value of the *cloisonné*. Only antique pieces possess any great *art value*.

Hell Hole

IT'S a place that started life as an outburst of profanity and ends up by being a respectable geographical expression:

Question:—"Somewhere near Truckee or Tahoe is a section called 'Hell Hole,' possibly on the Rubicon River.

How reached by nearest point either rail or machine?

Pack in? Horses or burros? Where obtained? Feed? Formation of country? Possible time of first snow? Game—fish? Suggestions on equipment.

As a general rule 'most anything from transmigration of souls to the price of beans in Boston is settled in the bunk-house, and the following has started several near battles, so for the sake of peace intercede.

What is the true grizzly? Are they extinct as a species or only in California?

Thank you for anything you can do for us."—12844, Fall River Mills, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Hell Hole is located near Rubicon Creek.

In 1849 it was a trackless and rough section. Some old miner called it "a —— of a hole," and the rest gave it that name—Hell Hole.

It is one of the most beautiful spots in that section and is easy of access. It is considered one of the show places of the region now and has a good road.

Re the grizzly: His scientific name is *Ursus Horribilis*, and he is likely to range in color from a dark, grizzled brown to almost white. He is different from other bears in that his claws are too straight to allow him to climb trees, while other kinds have hooked claws; also different in his gigantic size, in the shape of his head, in habits. I have seen a grizzly who was a dirty yellow color, and his mate was a dark brown.

The grizzly is not extinct in California, though many think so, and there are few of his kind left. One old he visits a warm spring in one place about 265 miles from here, sits on his tail and slides into the pool for a bath, almost every week in Summer. I don't want him shot so never hint at the location of his bathtub.

There are grizzlies in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado. Probably a few in Utah, Wyoming and Montana, in the more inaccessible parts of the mountains. I know where one buster roams in Arizona, too. About 1,200 to 1,400 pounds.

Some men claim only two kinds of bears in U. S., black and grizzly, but a scientist in the Smithsonian started out to prove this by skulls and wound up swearing there are fourteen kinds, all told. The black bear of the South is not at all like our black, and both are unlike the Maine black.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

A Job at Tahiti

"BIG BUSINESS" has its organization working there just as at home:

Question:—"Seeing your name mentioned in *Adventure* as one who will give information on western Pacific topics, I am writing to ask you about a contemplated trip thither.

I have somehow absorbed the idea, which I trust is well-founded, that Tahiti is the commercial center of all the groups under French domain, and that each island perhaps, or at least each small group, has its resident trader, perhaps an employee of a larger company with headquarters in Tahiti; and that a man with some capital, by living a while in Tahiti, will presently have opportunity to buy in a share in a schooner or trading-company, or presently find a job with an existing concern as resident on some outlying station.

Is this opinion justified by the facts? Return postage enclosed."—V. C. Clowe, Balboa Heights, C. Z.

Answer, by Mr. C. Brown, Jr.:—Your opinion is justified by the facts to this extent:

Tahiti is the commercial and governmental center of French Oceania, that area lying in the southeastern Pacific; each group is represented by various resident traders; and it is possible, from time to time, to buy in on a schooner.

But you'll find no opportunity to buy into the four and five hundred-thousand-dollar trading-companies. Nor is one but a few months down from above the line likely to "find a job with an existing concern as resident on some outlying station." The address and reference sheet that I am enclosing will explain the why and the wherefore of this.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

The Coast of Garba

As I went over the coast of Garba,
All for to view the sweet scenes of life,
There I beheld a young handsome creature,
That appeared to me like an angel bright.

I says: "Fair maid, don't you choose to marry?
Don't you choose to be a young sailor's wife?"
"Oh, no, kind sir, I don't choose to marry;
I had rather live a sweet single life."

I says: "Fair maid, what makes you differ
From all the rest of the female kind?
For you are beautiful, young and handsome,
To marry me pray be inclined."

She says: "Kind sir, if I must tell you,
I might have been married five years ago
To one young Reilly lives in this country.
I fear I have proved his overthrow."

I says, "Fair maid, then we will travel
Unto some foreign distant shore,
Where we'll sail over to Pennsylvania,
And adieu to Reilly forevermore."

She says: "Kind sir, if I must travel
Unto some foreign distant shore,
Then my poor heart will be always aching
To think of Reilly, whom I adore.

" 'Tis youth and folly makes young folks marry,
When once we are bound we must obey:
What can't be cured must be endured,
So fare you well, for I must obey."

(*Transcript from James E. Whitney, Boston.*)

The *Dreadnaught*

She's a saucy wild packet, she's a packet of fame;
She belongs to New York and the *Dreadnaught's* her name.
She's bound to the West, where the strong winds do blow;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll go.

The day of our sailing is fast drawing nigh,
And now, my pretty Mary, I must bid you good-by.
Farewell, dear old England and all we hold dear;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll steer.

Now the *Dreadnaught's* a-hauling out of Waterloo Dock,
And the boys and the girls on the pier they do flock.
We'll give them three cheers while the tears down do flow;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll go.

Now the gallant ship *Dreadnaught* in the Mersey does lie,
Waiting for the *Independence* to tow her to sea
All around that Black Rock where the Mersey does flow;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll go.

Now the *Dreadnaught's* a-bowling down the wild Irish Sea;
And the passengers are merry, for they're bound on a spree;
And the seaboys like lions skip around to and fro;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll go.

Now the *Dreadnaught's* a-sailing o'er the ocean so wide,
And the deep blue seas o'er her dark sides they do glide.
With our sails neatly spread the Red Cross we'll show;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll go.

Now the *Dreadnaught's* becalmed on the Banks of Newfoundland,
Where the water is green and the bottom is sand;
Where the fish of the ocean swim about to and fro;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll go.

Now the *Dreadnaught's* a-humming down the Long Island shore
And the pilot comes aboard as he's oft done before.
Fill away your main topsail, board your main tack also;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll go.

Now the *Dreadnaught's* arrived in New York once more.
We'll go up to old Brannigan's, whom we all do adore;
We'll call for strong liquor and be merry and free,
And we'll drink to the *Dreadnaught* where'er she may be.

Drink a health to the *Dreadnaught* and all her bold crew;
Drink a health to Captain Samuels and officers too.
Talk about your flash packets, Swallowtail and Black Ball;
The *Dreadnaught's* a clipper ship, and she can beat them all!

Now my story is ended and my tale it is told,
And I hope, my dear shipmates, you'll forgive if I'm bold,
For the song was composed while the watch was below;
Bound away in the *Dreadnaught* to the westward we'll go.

Old English Chantey

A's for the Anchor that hangs o'er the bows;
B's for the Bowsprit, as every one knows;
C's for the Capstan we merrily walk round;
D's for the Davits which lower our boat down.

Chorus: So merry, so merry, so merry are we,
No mortals on land are like sailors at sea.
Hi derry, ho derry, hey derry down;
Give sailors their *grog*, and there's nothing goes wrong.

E's for the Ensign which at our peak flew,
F's for the Fo'castle where live all our crew,
G's for the Guns where our brave boys did stand,
H's for the Hawsers, that never will strand.—*Cho.*

I's for the Irons where our booms ship;
J's for the Jibs that so neatly do sit;
K's for the Keelson, of which we are told;
L's for the Lanyard that keeps a good hold.—*Cho.*

M's for the Mainmast, so stout and so strong;
N's for the Needle that never points wrong;
O's for the Oars of our jolly-boat,
P's for the Pinnace that always will float.—*Cho.*

Q's for the Quarterdeck, where our officers stand;
R's for the Rudder, keep the ship in command
S's for the Stun'sails that drive her along;
T's for the Topsails we hoist with a song.—*Cho.*

U's for the Union which we all adore;
V's for the Vane which flies at our fore;
W's for the wheel at which we stand our time,
And the other three letters you can't bring in rime.

(*Transcript from Neil H. Wilson, North Tonawanda, N. Y.*)

Off to Sea Once More

I met with a gay young Frisco gal, and my heart was not my own;
But when I kissed her good-by at last, my money and watch was gone.
As I was walking down the street and people was gazing at me.
Said they, "There's a brave young sailor lad who's off once more to sea."

Chorus: Once more, once more, he's off to sea once more.
Oh, there's a brave young sailor lad, who's off to sea once more.

A boarding-master picked me up; his name was Shanghai Brown.
And I'll tell you the truth, he wasn't so ill, for he gave half a crown.
"Look here, my brave young sailor lad, there's no more work ashore.
But here's your chance; take ten pounds advance,
And go to sea once more."—*Cho.*

So I shipped me aboard a whaler that was bound for the Arctic Sea,
Where ice and snow and the cold winds blow, froze my toes all off'n me.
And the worst of it was I had no clothes to keep me dry and warm.
And then I swore, if I ever get ashore, to go to sea no more.

Cho: No more, no more; he's off to sea no more.
Oh, there's a brave young sailor lad; he goes to sea no more.

Look here, my brave young sailor boys, take this as a warning from me—
Steer wide of the gay young Frisco gals and do not go to sea.
Drink no more whisky, smoke no more cigars, and run with the girls no more,
But get married, my boy, and stop ashore, and go to sea no more.

Cho: Once more, once more they all go to sea once more.
Oh, there's a brave young sailor lad who goes to sea once more.

Send your old songs, or requests for 'em, to ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York. To be sure of an answer, enclose self-addressed envelop and full return postage. Do not send questions to this magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FEBRUARY 10TH ISSUE

Besides the five complete novelettes mentioned on the second page of this issue the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

WILD JUSTICE — ***J. Allan Dunn***
Trouble among the pearl-divers of Torres Straits.

LONESOME — ***Raymond S. Spears***
What came of the cougar's long'ng for company.

CAT-O'-MOUNTAIN A Four-Part Story Part III — ***Arthur O. Friel***
Jake Dalton's ghost claims another victim.

REQUIEM — ***Charles King Van Riper***
Jazz music above the scream'ng waters.

MOHAMED ALI AND THE BASHA OF TANGIER — ***George E. Holt***
How a Moor looks out for friends—and enemies.

STANDARD LOADS of DU PONT SHOTGUN POWDERS

Kind of Game	DUPONT (Bulk) SMOKELESS 12 GAUGE oz DRAMS	SHOT	16 GAUGE oz DRAMS	SHOT	20 GAUGE oz DRAMS	SHOT	SHOT SIZES ALL GAUGES
Turkey Geese	3½	1-⅛	2¾	1	2½	⅞	* 2 & 4
Brant Large Ducks	3¼	1-⅛	2¾	1	2½	⅞	4 in flight 0 over decoys
Medium Ducks Grouse Prairie Chicken	3¼	1-⅛	2½	1	2¼	¾	6
Squirrels Rabbits	3	1	2½	1	2¼	¾	6
Small Ducks Pheasants Pigeons Doves	3¼	1-⅛	2½	1	2¼	¾	7½
Quail Snipe Woodcock-Shore Birds	3	1 or 1-⅛	2½	1	2¼	¾	8
Reed Birds	3	1	2½	1	2¼	¾	10
Trapshooting	3	1 ⅛	2½	1	2¼	¾	7½

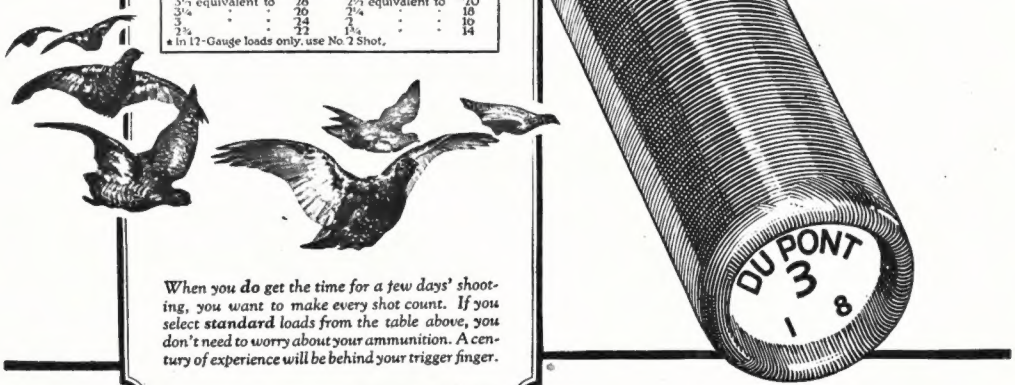
BALLISTITE (Dense) SMOKELESS

If BALLISTITE (*dense*) Powder is desired order by grains. A comparison follows of *Bulk* and *Dense* Loads:

DRAMS	GRAINS	DRAMS	GRAINS
3½ equivalent to	28	2½ equivalent to	20
3¼ " "	26	2¼ " "	18
3 " "	24	2 " "	16
2¾ " "	22	1¾ " "	14

* In 12-Gauge loads only, use No. 2 Shot.

When you **do** *get the time for a few days' shooting, you want to make every shot count. If you select* **standard** *loads from the table above, you don't need to worry about your ammunition. A century of experience will be behind your trigger finger.*



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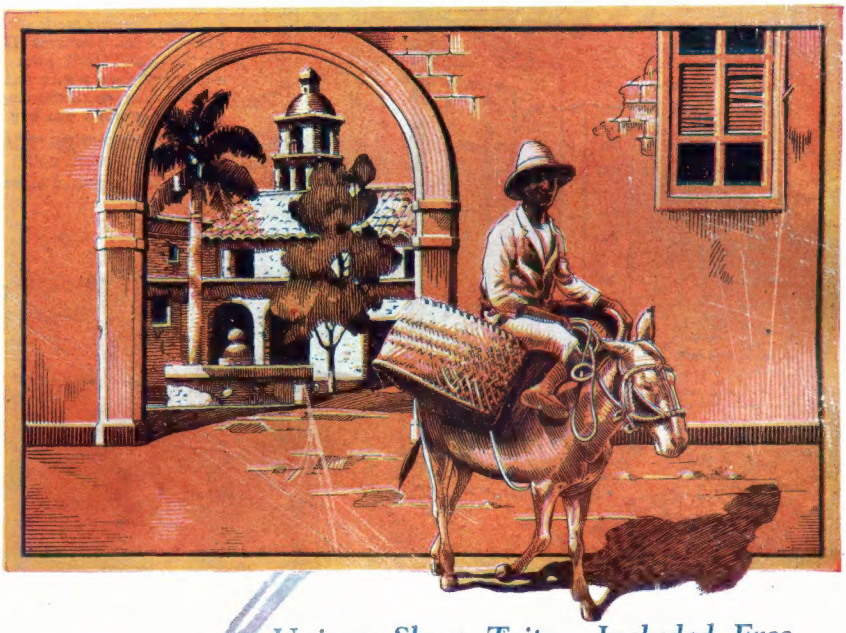
SHOOT DU PONT POWDERS

DU PONT



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